

H. L. Hilder.

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WILD WEST

WEEKLY

A MAGAZINE CONTAINING STORIES, SKETCHES ETC. OF WESTERN LIFE.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Application made for Second-Class Entry at N. Y. Post Office.

No. 89.

NEW YORK, JULY 1, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

YOUNG WILD WEST'S COWBOY BAND; OR, THE TUNE THEY PLAYED IN DEADWOOD.

By AN OLD SCOUT.



Young Wild West sprang from his horse and tore the mask from the face of the leader of the villainous trio. "It is Dick Doolittle, the gambler!" he exclaimed. "Just as I thought, boys. Dismount and tie them up!"

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Young Wild West's Cowboy Band

OR,

The Tune They Played in Deadwood.

BY AN OLD SCOUT.

CHAPTER I.

YOUNG WILD WEST AND HIS PARTNERS ON TIME.

"Boys, I reckon here's about ther place that Young Wild West an' his pard was to meet us."

"That's right, Sam. Here's where ther trail forks. Ther one to ther right goes to Weston an' ther one to ther left will take us to Deadwood."

"Well, it ain't likely that we'd go any further to-day, anyhow. Ther sun is putty close to sinkin', an' if Wild was here he'd tell us to go in camp, I'll bet. There's good grazin' fur ther cattle here, so I say that we go into camp."

"Well, Sam, if you say it, we'll do it. You're our boss till we git ther drove of cattle into Deadwood. After that every man will be his own boss."

"As long as he behaves himself he will. Young Wild West will be there with us, you know, an' he ain't ther one as will see his men goin' wrong without callin' 'em to a halt."

It was near the close of a warm summer day that the above conversation took place.

The scene was on the high grazing lands of eastern Wyoming, right on the border of the famous Black Hills, and the time was a few years ago when things were in a very unsettled condition in that region.

A band of cowboys, numbering a score, were taking a herd of several hundred cattle from Roaring Ranch to Deadwood, and Young Wild West, the owner of the ranch and cattle, had promised to meet them at the forks and go to Deadwood with them.

Sam Spud, the leader of the cowboys, gave orders to his men to pitch the camp, and they promptly set out to do it.

The cattle, tired from their long jaunt over the rough country, were glad to halt and nibble at the luxuriant grass.

Knowing that they would not stray, the entire party dismounted and turned their horses loose.

Then they set about to get their supper ready.

The supply wagon that had been drawn from the ranch by four mules was well stocked with provisions, and the hardy cowboys were not long in getting a meal ready.

They were just going to sit down to it when four horsemen were seen coming up the Weston trail.

"Here comes Young Wild West, I reckon!" cried one of the men.

"I reckon not," retorted Sam Spud, as he took a good look at them. "Young Wild West an' his pards ain't no sich hangdog-lookin' chaps as them. Them's what I call bad men, if I know anything about it."

The approaching horsemen were certainly not very prepossessing in appearance.

They were rough, dirty-looking fellows, and were armed to the teeth.

There was an air of extreme recklessness about them, too, and when they drew rein at the camp of the cowboys they looked around in such a domineering way that the men could not fail to notice it.

"What are you fellers doin' here?" one of them, who was evidently the leader, asked, as he spat a mouthful of tobacco juice dangerously close to Sam Spud's feet.

"You oughter be able to see, stranger," was the quick reply. "You ain't troubled with blindness, are you?"

"Oh, I guess I kin see about as far as ther next man," said the fellow. "Say, what have you got fur supper?"

"Bacon, corn bread, roast potatoes an' coffee."

"Good! That's jest ther kind of grub I like. I reckon me an' my pards will stay to supper."

"An' I reckon that you'd better ask if you kin first."

Sam Spud was anything if not spunky, and he was not going to allow the four rough-looking fellows ride over him any sort of fashion.

"Me ask? Why, I guess you don't know who I am!"

"No, an' I don't want to know."

"You don't, hey? Well, I'll tell you, anyhow. I'm Ike Boots, of Deadwood, an' when I git my dander up I make lead fly. I've jest come over from Weston, where I licked ther boss of ther town. I ain't in ther best of humor, either, but I reckon some of ther pickin's of what you've got there to eat will set me right. Git off your nags, boys!"

He dismounted and his three companions instantly followed suit.

There was not a man in the cowboy band who did not scent trouble.

They figured that the fellow who had introduced himself as Ike Boots was possessed of a large amount of nerve.

But they were not afraid of him.

"Now, then, you lopin' grasshoppers! I want somethin' to eat, an' I want it quick. Chuck out some of ther best of that grub you've got there. Hurry, now!"

He pulled out a six-shooter to emphasize his words.

Sam Spudd stepped around to get out of range of the weapon, and as he did he went right against the horse the bad man had been riding.

Then the leader of the cowboy band gave a start of surprise.

"Hanged if this ain't Young Wild West's horse, boys!" he cried.

A hoarse murmur went up from the men and instantly revolvers were very much in evidence.

"Hold up your hands, you infernal horse thief!" shouted one of the cowboys.

Instead of obeying, Ike Boots made a leap for the handsome sorrel he had been mounted on and was on his back in a jiffy.

"Clear ther track!" he yelled, and then he fired a couple of shots at those who barred his way.

"Don't hit ther horse!" shouted Sam Spud. "It's Young Wild West's sorrel stallion. Don't hit ther horse, whatever you do!"

Crack, crack, crack!

The three companions of the accused bad men mounted in a hurry and began firing wildly.

None of the shots took effect, fortunately for the cowboys, and away went the four bad men.

Just as they cleared the limits of the camp a shout went up from the Weston trail.

Sam Spud looked around and saw three horsemen dashing toward them.

He recognized them at a single glance.

They were Young Wild West, the dashing young Prince of the Saddle, and his two partners, Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart.

Young Wild West was mounted on a clumsy-looking gray, and he was doing his best to urge the animal forward at a higher speed.

"Whoopie! Whoopie!" yelled Cheyenne Charlie, who was a tall man with flowing black hair and a heavy mustache of the same hue. "We're comin', boys! Wait till you see ther measly coyotes bite ther dust!"

Crack!

His rifle spoke at that moment and one of the four bad men threw up his hands and fell from the back of his horse.

Crack!

It was Jim Dart, a handsome young fellow, who had not yet reached his majority, who fired the second shot, and another of the ruffians bit the dust.

Young Wild West held his rifle to his shoulder, but he did not fire.

Evidently he wanted to take Ike Boots alive.

"Whoa, Spitfire!" he cried out suddenly, in a ringing voice.

The effect was really astonishing.

The sorrel came to an abrupt stop and the horse thief went flying over his head like a catapult.

Then the other rascal brought his steed to a halt and held up his hands.

Young Wild West and his partners quickly reached the scene and dismounted.

Ike Boots was lying where he had landed.

The fall had temporarily stunned him.

He was just recovering when Young Wild West, his dark eyes flashing and his wealth of chestnut hair flying in the breeze, sprang upon him.

"You sneaking cur!" exclaimed the boy. "You were not satisfied to leave the town in the proper way, after you were given a chance, were you? No! You had to exchange horses with me, didn't you? Make him a prisoner, boys! Such fellows as he is should not be allowed to run at large."

"I reckon a rope necktie is ther thing for him," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie, as he knocked the revolver from the man's hand as he pulled it from his belt. "He'll git his medicine, all right!"

In less than three minutes both Ike Boots and the other survivor of the rascally quartette were securely bound.

By this time the whole band of cowboys had reached the scene.

"Hooray fur Young Wild West!" cried Sam Spud. "He's ther Prince of the Saddle an' ther Champion Deadshot of ther West, boys; an' he's only a boy, fur all that. Now, then—Hoora-a-ay!"

The cheer that went up awoke the echoes.

Young Wild West took off his broad-brimmed pearl-colored felt hat and bowed smiling at the men.

"That will do, boys," he said, quietly. "I am very glad to meet you. We would have been here before if Ike Boots and his men had not made some trouble in Weston and detained us. I guess he had no idea that we were heading this way when he started the rumpus in front of the post-office. If he had he would not have taken this trail when he rode away on my horse. Just bring the rascals to the camp with you and we will see what is to be done with them."

Young Wild West took the sorrel by the bridle and followed the men to camp.

In his neat-fitting suit of buckskin, trimmed with red silk fringe, the boy made a handsome and dashing picture.

He was a perfect type of a true young Westerner and his reputation as a terror to evil-doers extended throughout the entire West.

With Jim Dart, his chum, and Cheyenne Charlie, the scout, he had been through many perils and exciting adventures, and he was so used to the mountains and plains that staying around the rich gold mines he owned was irksome.

Having received word from his ranch that a herd of cattle was to be delivered at Deadwood, he had arranged to meet the cowboys and go with them, just for the trip.

When the two prisoners had been tied to the wheels of the supply wagon our hero turned to the men and said:

"I'm a little hungry, boys. I see you have supper ready, so what do you say if we have something to eat?"

"That's what's ther matter!" retorted Sam Spud. "Ike Boots reckoned as how he was goin' to help himself to our grub, but he made a mistake. I found out that he had your horse jest then, an' that's how ther trouble begun fur fair. You come along jest in time, fur they'd have got a good start afore we could have mounted."

"We always try to be on time," spoke up Jim Dart. "So the rascals stopped here to get something to eat, then? Well, they must have had an idea that Wild would not pursue them. I guess anyone who takes his horse won't get very far with it."

"You can't call it stealin'," said Boots, looking at them appealingly. "I done it jest fur fun. It was only a trade, anyhow. That's all you kin make out of it."

"We won't argue the question just now," Young Wild West said to him. "I am hungry, and I am going to have something to eat."

Soon all hands were enjoying the supper that the cowboy who acted as cook had prepared.

They were all hearty men, so there had to be plenty cooked to satisfy them.

But the cook had made no mistake.

He had supplied enough for all hands, and when they had finished there was some over.

"Give the prisoners a bite, boys, and then go and bury the two who went under," said Wild, in his cool nad easy way.

"There ain't much need of givin' them two fellers anything to eat," spoke up one of the men. "They ain't got very long to live."

"Not unless they change their ways."

"Why, ain't you goin' to hang 'em?"

"Well, I hardly think we'll do that."

The majority of the cowboy band looked surprised.

But there were those among them who knew that Young Wild West never took part in a lynching.

If it was extremely necessary that a man should be hanged he usually went away and let those who were most anxious to do it.

In this case he did not think it necessary to hang anyone.

Weston and Deadwood were both close enough by, and the prisoners could be taken there, if needs be, and locked up.

But the dashing boy meant to let the two villains go and give them another chance to do better.

CHAPTER II.

THE BAND PLAYS THEIR FIRST TUNE IN DEADWOOD.

Young Wild West walked up to the two prisoners.

"You fellows tried to run things your own way over in Weston this afternoon, and you were lucky you did not get shot. You promised to ride out of town and behave yourselves in the future, and I let you go. Then you stole my horse and came here and tried to run things. You see the result, don't you? There were four of you then, and now there are only two. Now the question is, which do you want to do—behave yourselves or be lynched?"

"We'll behave ourselves if you'll only give us another chance!" cried the man who had surrendered of his own free will.

"Yes, I reckon we'd rather do better than to die," added Ike Boots.

"There is some force-put about this, ain't there?" spoke up Cheyenne Charlie. "You're willin' to make any kind of promise, but you don't mean to keep it after you make it."

"Yes, we do."

"You promise, then, that you'll mind your own business and be honest hereafter?" asked our hero.

"Yes!" came from the pair of them.

His companion seemed to be earnest, but Boots was plainly not in earnest.

He was simply promising anything to save his life.

He was not able to even affect that he meant it.

Wild did not want to have him hanged, so he ordered the men to cut him loose.

Half a dozen of the cowboys had just finished scooping out a shallow grave to hold the remains of the other two villains, and when they were free, Wild told them to go and take what money and valuables there were upon the bodies.

"It belongs to you by rights, I suppose," he remarked. "You may as well have what they left behind them."

The rascals soon possessed themselves of the few dollars they found and then stood waiting.

"Take your own horse, Boots—don't make a mistake and take mine again—and move!" exclaimed Young Wild West.

The man was only too glad to do so.

Some of the men looked on as though they thought Wild was altogether too lenient with the horse thief, but they said nothing.

They knew the young ranch owner well enough to fully realize that he did things to suit himself, and not them.

Boots and his companion got on their horses—the gray Wild had come to the camp with being the mount of the former—and rode away at a smart gallop.

The sun had sunk below the irregular mountain line in the west by this time, and when the bodies of the two villains had been deposited in their last resting-place Young Wild West and his two partners took a look at the cattle and then took their seats in the light of the campfire and proceeded to make themselves at home.

They were used to camping out and preferred it to living in a comfortable house at times.

The cowboys from Roaring Ranch were a fine-looking lot of men, and our hero was much pleased with them when he looked them over.

There were three or four musical geniuses among them, and they had brought their instruments along.

A Mexican named Tony had a guitar and three Americans, Bob, Willis and Larks, respectively, had a banjo, cornet and concertina.

Neither our hero nor his two partners had ever heard them play, and when Willis, who was the leader of the band, as they called it, asked if they would like to, they promptly answered in the affirmative.

The instruments were promptly brought from the wagon and after a little tuning up the four started in.

The music was far better than one might have expected to hear, and Young Wild West was much pleased.

"I did not know I had a cowboy band," he said, with a laugh, when they had rendered three or four pieces.

"Ther whole lot of 'em is what might be called a cowboy band," observed Cheyenne Charlie, with a grin. "But them four is a regular band—a band what makes music."

"Well, Young Wild West's Cowboy Band ain't so bad, is it?" spoke up Sam Spud. "I'm glad I'm a member of it, even if I don't play any music."

"Ther best tune I kin play is with my shooters when I git in a tight place," said the scout. "When a pair of six-shooters gits poppin' away they make real music, an' don't you forget it!"

The Cowboy Band enjoyed themselves immensely until it was time to turn in, and then all but the watchers went to sleep.

Nothing disturbed them or the cattle during the night, and the next morning they were up at daylight.

Wild knew they would have to take an early start in order to reach Deadwood before dark that night, so he urged the men to hurry up with the breakfast.

They got a hustle on them, and in less than an hour they had the herd in motion.

Tony, the Mexican, drove the mules that were hitched to the wagon and followed along in the wake of the cattle.

Young Wild West took part in the herding, and he worked at it like a veteran.

When noon came they had covered considerably over half the distance, and then our friends knew they would get to Deadwood in good season.

Wild wanted to land the cattle in the stockyards of the buyer before dark if he could.

If this could not be done it would be hard work for the men in the night-time.

He encouraged them all he could, and found that they were doing their level best.

The cattle went along all right, not the least bit of a stampede occurring.

About four in the afternoon they came in sight of what was then called the "Worst Town in the West."

It is not likely that Deadwood deserved such a title, but someone had given it the nickname, and there were plenty who felt proud of it.

Young Wild West and his partners now left the cowboys and rode on ahead to make the man who was to take the cattle be ready to receive them.

In a few minutes they reached his stockyard and found him in the little office near it.

It so happened that he was expecting the cattle, so nothing was in the way for them to come right ahead.

The cattleman's name was Dave Libby, and he was one of the original settlers of Deadwood.

He had roughed it throughout the Wild West and had been cowboy, miner, gambler and an all-around bad man.

Now he was a stockman and making lots of money in beef and hides.

Wild was not very well acquainted with him, having only seen him once before, but he soon found that Dave Libby could be counted on as being honest, no matter what his failings were.

"I'm glad to meet you, Young Wild West," the stockman said, as he clasped our hero's hand and gave it an extra tight squeeze.

"And I am glad to meet you, Mr. Libby," retorted Wild, slipping the grip and then going him one better.

The stockman winced.

"You've got somewhat of a grip, I reckon," he observed, with a good-natured grin.

"Well, yes. I can squeeze a man's hand pretty hard if I try to."

"Did you try jest then?"

"Not much."

"Well, don't try, then. I reckon you kin outdo me, an' I'm called a regular terror at shakin' hands."

"A good grip is a nice thing to have sometimes," said our hero, with a laugh.

"I reckon it is, in more ways than one, Young Wild West. Say! You've jest got into town, I reckon."

"Yes."

"Then you ain't heard ther news?"

"No. You are the first person we have spoken to."

"There's ther dickens to pay here in Deadwood."

"What's the trouble?" queried Wild, getting interested.

"Well, ther whole town is under what they call mob rule."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, there's about a hundred bad men, who took a notion this mornin' to run things their own way. They've cleaned out ther express bank an' have took charge of ther biggest gin-mill in ther place. Six men have been shot dead an' over twenty wounded. Ther sheriff has sent fur ther militia."

"I reckon we've jest arrived in a good time, Wild," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

"A bad time, I should think, unless you like to have hot lead a-flyin' around your ears," said Libby.

"Well, Charlie rather likes that kind of work," observed Jim Dart.

"I guess we will stay in Deadwood just as long as we want to, mob rule or no mob rule," said Wild, coolly.

The stockman looked at him keenly for a moment and then an admiring glance shot from his eyes.

"By jove!" he cried. "I've hearn tell that you are a regular scorcher when you starts in to do a thing. I'll bet that with you to lead us we kin put down this bad gang afore the sojers gits here."

"Well, if you want any help, Mr. Libby, you will find me and my cowboy band at your service."

"Cowboy band, hey? What do they play—music?"

"Yes, both kinds of music—the real kind and the crackin' of shooters and the whistling of bullets, if it is necessary."

"Good!" exclaimed Libby. "I was jest thinkin' when you come along that ther gang might take a notion to come down here an' make some trouble fur me. I'm a deputy sheriff, you know, an' they ain't got much use fur anyone who's tryin' to run things accordin' to law. I honestly think that Deadwood is in ther worst state it ever was jest now. If they do come down here to my stockyard I reckon I'll git Young Wild West's Cowboy Band to play 'em a tune."

"And we'll be only too glad to do it," retorted our hero, while Charlie and Jim nodded.

A few minutes later the advance of the herd of cattle came up.

The stockman had his men ready and they got them going into the yard all right.

Just as the biggest part of the cattle were in the yard a series of shouts came to their ears from the main street of the town.

Dave Libby looked a trifle uneasy and ran to the office and got his rifle.

"Ther mob is comin' this way, as sure as guns!" he exclaimed.

"Hurry up, boys!" cried Young Wild West. "Get the cattle in the stockyard."

The cowboys knew that something was wrong and they put themselves at their best.

They had just managed to get them all in when a volley of revolver-shots rang out and a big crowd of men, mounted and on foot, came in sight.

It was the mob, sure enough!

Wild no sooner realized this than he called the four musicians to him.

"Get your instruments and start in to playing right in front of the office here," he said.

The players looked a bit surprised, but they hastened to do as he said.

As the mounted men in the crowd rode up, yelling and firing their shooters, the band struck up.

It was a lively air that they played, and it was several seconds before the mob knew what was going on.

Then they ceased their yelling and shooting and gathered closer to listen.

But music had no charms for them just then.

A swarthy-faced man with a mustache suddenly urged his horse close to the office and commanded the music to cease.

As the four players were just at the finish of a tune, they did so.

"It's Dick Doolittle, the gambler," whispered Dave Libby to Wild. "They say that he is the leader of the hard crowd."

"Ah!" was the reply. "So he is the leader, is he? Well, he had better let us alone."

"What do you call this?" shouted the man, pointing to the musicians and looking straight at our friends.

"Young Wild West's Cowboy Band!" answered Cheyenne Charlie, quickly. "There's twenty-three what belongs to it. Want us to play another tune?"

The fellow uttered a sneering laugh.

"I reckon we kin play all ther tunes that Deadwood wants," he retorted. "You fellers just make yourself scarce. We've come down here to git a few cattle to hold a barbecue with. Boys, git out your lariats an' go in ther yard an' lasso what you want of 'em."

"Hold on!" exclaimed Young Wild West, stepping forward. "I guess you had better leave those cattle alone."

"What!" roared Dick Doolittle. "You dare to go ag'in me, young feller?"

"Oh, yes! Just hold up your hands, now, or I'll put a hole through the center of your forehead!"

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE MOB WAS SUBDUED.

If ever there was a man astonished it was Dick Doolittle. How it happened he did not know, but there stood

Young Wild West with a revolver leveled straight at his head.

He had not expected it—in fact, he had not dreamed of any such a thing happening.

He was the recognized leader of the mob that had terrorized the town since the night before, and up to this time no one had dared to even talk back to him.

"Hold up your hands, or you're a dead man!"

Young Wild West repeated the command in a voice that was full of meaning.

A hush came over the crowd as the gambler slowly lifted his hands.

When he got them as high as he could a hoarse murmur went up.

The cowboy band was ranged in a line before the office and every man had a revolver in his hand.

It was the first opposition the bad men had run against since they carried all before them on the first break they made.

"Quit ther game, boys, an' leave my cattle alone!" called out Dave Libby, in a persuasive tone of voice. "There's no use in havin' a whole lot of trouble."

The majority of the men could hear him, but instead of subduing their passions it made them worse.

"Let's burn Libby out!" shouted one.

A hoarse yell of approval went up.

Wild saw that something had to be done to quell them.

"Stay right where you are!" he cried. "If you don't I will shoot your leader!"

They paused for a moment, but that was not sufficient. Then our hero, seeing this, made a leap forward, and, catching Dick Doolittle by the arm, pulled him from his horse. "Into the office with him!" he said. "Quick, boys!"

Before the rascally gambler was hardly aware of what was going on he was pulled into the little building.

"The band will now play again—the same tune, boys!"

As our hero said this the music struck up once more.

The crowd remained strangely silent.

Their leader had been whisked from them so suddenly that the men were at a loss what to do.

"Turn back and go about your business, and we'll let your leader go!" Wild shouted. "If you don't you will never see him alive again!"

The crowd hesitated.

Cheyenne Charlie was in the office with Dick Doolittle, and when he heard what Wild said he turned to the villain and exclaimed:

"Come here to ther door an' tell that gang to make themselves scarce, or off goes ther top of your head!"

As Jim Dart had the villain covered he really felt that such a thing was liable to happen, anyway.

"I'll do it," he said. "Ther men didn't intend to take any of Libby's cattle, anyhow. They jest come down here to wake things up a little."

"Come on an' do it afore trouble begins!" cried Charlie.

Dart walked to the door with the prisoner, still keeping him covered with his shooter.

Charlie opened the door.

"Now give it to 'em good an' strong!" he said to the leader.

Dick Doolittle held up his hand.

Wild stopped the music and then there was a silence.

"Boys," said the captured man, "if you don't want me to go under, go on back to your headquarters. I'll be right after you if I do. But as sure as you go to makin' a fight here I'll have my skull filled full of lead. Now, jest go on back, an' we'll settle things some other time."

Young Wild West hardly expected the men would take much notice of this, but they must have thought considerable of their leader, for they turned and walked and rode away in groups.

Sam Spud, who had mounted his horse, rode along after them when the last had turned the corner, and, seeing that they were heading right on down the main street, he came back.

"They're gone!" he said. "You can't tell how soon they'll be back, though."

"They won't come back here unless I tell 'em to," spoke up Dick Doolittle from the door.

"Well, when you tell them to come back just make up your mind that you are going to go under the minute I set eyes on you," retorted Wild, coolly. "You will take my advice and disperse the band you have got together, for if you don't they will surely get the worst of it. Mob rule can't last long, you know."

The gambler shrugged his shoulders, but did not deign to say anything.

"You can go on," Wild said. "Bring his horse, one of you."

A cowboy quickly led the steed up to the door.

"Thank you, Young Wild West!" exclaimed Dick Doolittle, as he mounted his horse. "You had me in your power, and could have put an end to me if you had so desired. But you did not do it. I may be able to return the compliment some time. So long, till we meet again!"

"Be careful how you act when we do!" Wild answered as the villain rode away.

"Well, if that don't beat all!" ejaculated Dave Libby when the leader of the mob disappeared. "How did you do that, Young Wild West?"

"Well, I can't tell you any more than you saw how I did it. But they will come back, if it is not until to-night some time. You must get ready for them, Mr. Libby. This mob law in Deadwood must be put down. There are plenty of good fighting men who do not sympathize with the rioters—there must be. I will help you out and my cowboy band will play a tune in Deadwood that some of these people will never forget."

"Good enough! Putty work! That's what I like to hear. We've got plenty of good men here, an' all they want is a leader. I reckon you're that leader, Young Wild West. Jest wait; I'll send a couple of men around town as far as they dare to go an' notify some of ther boys to come

up here. You see, them what's layin' low ther mob ain't been interferin' with much."

"Yes, I understand. But they will wake up after the mob has gone a little too far."

"Well, they're dependin' on ther sojers to git here. Then they'll make themselves heard from."

"That may be a good while."

"You think ther gang kin be busted up afore ther sojers git here, then?"

"Oh, yes! If they have no more sand in them than they showed a little while ago, I don't believe it will be very long before they will be glad to quit the game they are playing. Dick Doolittle is the only one they have to lead them, it seems, and without a leader they can do nothing when it comes to a real fight. Of course, they can ride about the streets and yell and shoot their revolvers, but that isn't fighting; that's only bluff."

"I reckon you know jest what you're talkin' about. Well, as soon as I git ther couple of men out to hunt up some of ther men who will stick to us I want to pay you fur ther cattle. It might be that ther mob gang cleans me out, an' then I won't have a chance to pay you."

"All right," laughed Wild. "I'll take the money and run the chances of keeping it until this affair blows over. I won't leave Deadwood till it does blow over, either."

"An' you'll keep your cowboy band right here, too, I reckon?"

"Oh, yes! The mob may want to hear that tune again before they quit, you know."

They now went into the office and the stockman sent two of his men, as he said he would.

Then he counted out the money he owed Wild for the cattle and got his receipt for it.

Our hero called his men up one at a time and gave them five dollars apiece.

"This is a little present," he said. "You did well to get the cattle over in such good shape and so quickly. You'll want a little spending money while you're in Deadwood, so this will help you out some."

When every man had received his five dollars Sam Spud took off his hat and proposed three cheers for the dashing young ranch owner.

The men fairly yelled themselves hoarse.

"Now, hooray for Young Wild West's Cowboy Band!" cried Cheyenne Charlie.

Then there was some more yelling, which the mob surely must have heard in the distance.

"Boys," said Wild, addressing the cowboy band. "I want to give you a piece of advice. The mob seems to have control of the town, and they would be only too glad to get hold of some of you, or drop you, perhaps. My advice is to keep together all the time. There are twenty of you, and you ought to be able to give a good account of yourselves. There are only a few over a hundred in the gang. Dick Doolittle has at his back, I should say, and with Charlie, Jim and myself to help you, I guess we can make things hum for awhile."

"I reckon you three are equal to twenty-five of them fellers when it comes to a shootin' match!" exclaimed Sam Spud. "I knows what I'm talkin' about when I says that."

"Well, then, we will make our headquarters right here at the stockyard for the present. It is beginning to get dark, so you'd better get a hustle on you and fix up the camp."

"Take that shed there fur your quarters," spoke up Dave Libby. "I'll have my men clean it out fur you in a jiffy."

"We'll git it cleaned out!" exclaimed Sam Spud. "I reckon that will be a good place to camp under, fur I think we're goin' to have some rain afore to-morrer mornin'."

The cowboys went to work, and in a short time they had fitted up quite comfortable quarters under the big shed that the stockman used to stow his wagons.

Some of the latter were pulled out to make room, and these were drawn up so they could be used as a sort of breastworks in case of an attack from the mob of bad men.

The cowboys made their fires out in front of the shed and then proceeded to cook their supper.

Wild and his partners were invited to eat with the stockman, but they declined, saying that what was good enough for the cowboy band would do very well for them.

After supper was over Willis, the cornet player of the band, came up to our hero in an embarrassed manner.

"What's the trouble?" queried Wild, looking at him rather curiously.

"Well, Mr. West, ther fact is that I was 'spectin' to be able to call on my sweetheart, which lives here in Deadwood. I wrote her a letter a week ago an' told her I was comin' over. I've been sorter worryin' about her, 'cause I like ther gal, an' she's promised to be my wife. I don't mind tellin' you that we had it arranged to git married afore we left fur Roarin' Ranch. I didn't tell any of ther boys about it, 'cause I was goin' to give 'em a surprise. But now that things is all upside down here in town I don't know how I am goin' to git a chance to see her."

"Willis, you will be able to see her all right. I'll help you. I know how you feel on the subject. Dick Doolittle, the gambler, and his gang shan't deprive you of seeing your sweetheart. In what part of the town does she live in?"

"Clean over to ther other side, sir. Not far from where ther East Wagon Road comes in?"

"I know where it is. What's her name, Willis?"

"Tillie Pett. She's ther darter of Old Man Pett, ther man what runs ther express from ther railroad station to ther bank."

"Ah! I know him. Well, the chances are that the rioters have made it pretty lively for the girl's father, Willis, and it may be that we'll have a pretty hard time getting to the house. But we'll go, just the same."

The cowboy musician's eyes fairly danced with delight. "When will we go, Mr. West?" he asked.

"Right away. Just tell the other three musicians that I want them."

"Yes, sir!"

Wild promptly sought out Charlie and Jim.

"Boys," said he, "I guess we will take a little trip across town."

The two looked at him in surprise.

"Where are you going to?" queried Dart.

"We'll take the four musicians over to the house of a man named Pett."

"What for?" asked Charlie.

"One of them has a sweetheart living there, and I thought it would be a good idea to take the music along, since I promised to go over with him. It is Willis, and he says that he intended to get married before he went back to Roaring Ranch. I don't want to see the man disappointed, so we will go over with him. We will take the musicians along to play that tune in case any of the bad gang gets after us."

Both the scout and Dart said no more.

Young Wild West did queer things sometimes, but they were not the ones to argue against anything he proposed.

In a few minutes the four players of the cowboy band appeared with their instruments.

"Are you ready, boys?" asked Wild.

"Yes!" came the reply.

"All right, then. We will go on foot. Spud, you keep things straight till we get back."

CHAPTER IV.

THE COWBOY BAND PLAYS A LITTLE MORE.

Receiving the assurance that Sam Spud would look after things, Young Wild West and his companions started for the home of Willis' sweetheart.

Wild did not want to run across any of the rioters if he could help it, but he was ready for them in case such a thing happened.

They kept to the outskirts of the town and worked their way gradually around.

It being pretty dark, as the sky was clouded, they got along without being seen by anyone.

But it was necessary that they should proceed for a few hundred yards through a very thickly-settled part of the town in order to reach the place where the cowboy's sweetheart lived.

The big hotel on the main street was where the rioters were quartered, and that was only two hundred yards from the house.

When they reached the thickly-settled part our friends noticed that some of the shanties and houses were pretty well torn apart.

These, no doubt, belonged to those who had opposed the gang.

As they neared the house Wild found that several men were following them.

There were a dozen of them in less than a minute, and they kept coming all the time.

"They are looking for trouble, I guess," he said. "They belong to the bad gang, but they are staying at their homes, I suppose. Well, if they know when they are well off, they will let us alone."

"I should reckon so!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, as he tapped the butt of one of his revolvers significantly.

"There is the house!" said Willis, suddenly. "The gang has been at it, by ther looks of things."

"So they have," answered our hero. "I wonder if there is anyone in it?"

They went up to the building and found the door nailed up from the inside and heavy wooden bars across the windows.

Some of the weather-boards had been ripped off and the glass was nearly all out of the windows.

"We'll go around to the back," suggested our hero, and he led the way.

As they turned the corner of the building a voice called out:

"Halt!"

"That's Mr. Pett!" cried Willis. "Hey, there! It's me—Willis, from Roarin' Ranch!"

"Why, so it is!" came the answer. "Who's them with yer?"

"Young Wild West an' some more of my friends. Is Tillie all right?"

"Yes, there ain't any of us been hurt so far, but we don't know how long it will last that way."

"Well, we will try and make it last till all danger is over, Mr. Pett," spoke up Wild, and then he hastened to the man and shook hands with him.

"Why, bless me!" exclaimed the expressman. "If it ain't ther Champion Deadshot, I'm a liar! I didn't believe Willis when he said Young Wild West was with him. I've seen you before, Wild, an' I know what you are. Go right on in. I'll be in as soon as I make sure there ain't no one follerred you here."

"Oh, there is a whole gang following us," retorted Wild. "But never mind. If they got to trying anything funny they will be mowed down like grain before a sickle. Willis was anxious to see your daughter, and I undertook to pilot him over here. Dick Doolittle's crowd are not running Deadwood as much as they thought they were, and they will be doing it a great deal less before we get through with them."

Two females now appeared at the back door.

They were Pett's wife and daughter.

"Here I am, Tillie!" cried Willis, and the next minute he had the girl in his arms right in the presence of all hands.

"Nica girl and Willis nica man," commented Tony, the Mexican.

This opinion was shared by all hands.

The men who had been following our friends had stopped near the corner of the house and were standing there as though undecided as to what course to pursue.

"Come out there with me, Pett," said Wild, leading the way. "We will see if we can't talk a little sense in them."

Rifle in hand, the expressman followed.

"What is the matter with you fellows?" Wild asked, in his free-and-easy way of talking. "Do you want anything, or did you follow us here out of curiosity?"

"Who are you with, ther sheriff or Dick Doolittle?" asked one of the men from the darkness.

"Neither side, just yet. We are simply going it on our own hook," answered Wild.

"Who are you, anyhow?" another voice said.

"Don't you know?"

"No, if I did I wouldn't ask."

"Wasn't you up at Libby's stockyard just before dark?"

"Yes, I was there."

"Well, then, you must have seen me. I am Young Wild West, and I've got the players of my cowboy band with me. Do you want to hear some music?"

"What kind?"

"Oh, any kind. Pistol-shots and yells, if you want it that way."

"We ain't lookin' fur no muss jest now," said the first speaker. "We've got a leader an' we do as he tells us to. If you've got them bugle things an' banjos with you, you might give us some music, though."

"Certainly."

Young Wild West knew that the music would attract a big crowd there, but he was ready for almost anything just then, so he did not hesitate.

"Go ahead and play, boss!" he exclaimed.

"We'd better do it inside," suggested one of the band. "It's beginnin' to rain an' we'll git our instruments all wet."

"All right; go inside, then. These fellows can hear it well enough, since they have broken the window-panes out. I suppose they anticipated something like this when they were smashing things around here."

The most of the crowd heard this, but no one said anything.

Probably they were not used to dealing with such a cool person as Young Wild West.

The four musicians were now inside the house and they soon had their instruments in tune.

Then they struck up the music.

Young Wild West and his two partners remained outside with Pett.

In less than two minutes after the music started a big crowd was seen coming from the direction of the rioters' quarters.

"Take it easy, boys!" Wild yelled out to them. "Life is too short to waste it in starting rows. Hey, there! Drop that stone!"

One of the men had picked up a stone and was in the act of throwing it at the house.

He dropped it quickly enough.

Probably if he had not he would have dropped himself. The music kept right on inside the house and the crowd continued to gather.

After the players stopped for a rest Wild started in to talk in a reasoning way to the mob.

He showed how foolish they were for acting the way they had done, and drew a vivid picture of the consequences when the military forces arrived.

"If you quit this business now and go back to your work the chances are that you will not be called up at all when the soldiers get here," he concluded with.

It was wonderful what effect his talk had on the men.

Some of them walked away to their homes and others remained to hear the music.

But there was still plenty of them who were going to stick by Dick Doolittle.

Wild knew that he had made a deep impression on the majority of them, and he figured that it was not going to be such a hard time to get things running straight in Deadwood again.

After awhile all the cowboys came out of the house but Willis.

He was doing his courting now.

The other three were glad to give him an opportunity to be alone with his sweetheart.

They had heard about the proposed marriage and were anticipating a big time when it took place.

After an hour had passed there were very few outside the house.

Wild called out and asked them if Dick Doolittle was anywhere about.

"He's at ther hotel," was the reply.

"Well, he had better stay there," our hero said. "Unless he calls off the mob he has raised he will fare pretty bad the next time we meet. You can tell him that when you see him."

There was no reply to this, and then Wild went in the house, leaving Cheyenne Charlie to stand on guard.

He had not been in the house more than ten minutes when Charlie called him, saying that Dick Doolittle wanted to see him.

"Ah!" exclaimed the dashing young deadshot; "it is either a case of give in or bluff with the fellow. Well, he will find that I will meet him on all conditions."

The leader of the bad gang was mounted on a big bay horse, and when Wild came out he rode forward.

"I come as a friend, Young Wild West," he said. "Some of ther gang has told me what you said in ther speech you made a little while ago, an' I've come to ther conclusion that you're about right. Boys, ther riot business is all off. Go home an' start in on your regular work. Don't do any fightin' unless ther sheriff or his men make you! We've been raisin' cane an' we've had a high old time, but we ain't goin' to suffer fur it. We're jest not goin' to be touched at all. Go home, boys!"

A shout of approval went up.

It seemed that the men were willing to abide by what the gambler said.

He had a great control over them.

"You see that I mean what I say, Young Wild West," the villain resumed, as he turned again to our hero. "Now, suppose we be friends?"

"All right. You can be my friend, if you want to. But look out that you do not try to trick me."

"I am perfectly honest in what I am sayin'. Take me in ther house, now, an' get ther sheriff to let up on me."

"As this is not my house, I cannot invite you in," retorted Wild. "But if you like the tune we play, I will call the other musician out and give you some music. Hey, Willis, come out with your cornet."

Willis promptly did so, and when he appeared his sweetheart came with him.

She was a very pretty girl was Tillie Pett, and when Dick Doolittle saw her standing in the light that shone from the window he gave a start.

"My!" he exclaimed to himself; "I didn't know that there was such a pretty gal in Deadwood."

Wild overheard the remark, and, turning to him, said:

"Well, she belongs to another, so you shouldn't go and fall in love with her."

"Oh!" and the villain laughed. "Me fall in love? I reckon I'm out of that kind of game long ago."

"Oh, it isn't likely she would want to wipe her feet on such as you, anyway," said Wild, coolly. "You are Dick Doolittle, the gambler and mob leader, you know."

The man winced, and the glance that shot from his eyes told plainly that he would have strangled the boy right then and there if he only dared.

But like a great many other villains, he was afraid of Young Wild West.

"Give our friend a tune," said our hero, not acting as though he noticed the look that had been shot at him. "He seems to be all right. I have heard that music has a great effect on some of nature's creations."

The four players at once started up their music.

Dick Doolittle watched them for a few seconds and then his eyes turned to pretty Tillie Pett again.

Young Wild West was watching him all the while.

He saw that the villain had taken a great notion to the girl all at once.

It struck him that Doolittle might keep his word about breaking up the mob, but that he was going to interfere with the young lady he could easily see.

"I will have to keep a good eye on the scoundrel while I stay in Deadwood," he thought. "I want to see Willis and the girl happily married if it is possible. Willis is a pretty good sort of a fellow, so I am told, and he says he intends to take his bride to Roaring Ranch with him. There is room for a hustling girl like her out there, and I am going to see to it that she gets there."

That was quite enough to make it go, for when Wild decided on a thing he generally carried it through.

But sometimes lots of difficulties came in his way.

And that was the way it was to be in this case.

When Wild thought the musicians had played enough he told them to stop.

Then Willis went in the house to bid his sweetheart good-night.

A few minutes later our friends were on their way back to the stockyard, and not a man offered to follow them.

CHAPTER V.

THE VILLAINOUS TRIO.

Dick Doolittle left at the same time Wild and his friends did.

He mounted and rode straight to the hotel where the rioters had made their headquarters.

When he got there he found about fifty of the men in the place, some of them so much under the influence of liquor that they were oblivious to what was going on and others in a very hilarious state.

The appearance of the gambler was greeted with cheers.

"Where have you been, Dick?" one fellow, who could barely stand, asked.

"I've been talking to Young Wild West," was the reply.

"An' you didn't shoot him dead in his tracks?" spoke up another in surprise.

"No, I didn't have the chance. One thing I did do, though; I told him that we'd quit ther game we've been playing if he'd git ther sheriff to call it all off."

"What did he say?"

"He said we'd be sorry if we didn't quit. He made a little speech to ther boys an' said as how ther cavalrymen would come here an' mow us down like grass if we wasn't quiet by ther time they showed up. I think so myself, to tell ther truth. I think we've had a jolly good spree, an' if ther folks we've injured are satisfied, we ought to be. It will never be known who shot ther men what went down, so there won't be nothin' done to anyone fur that. Give us some of that liquor you've got there, an' in ther mornin' we'll hold a meetin' an' talk it over. One thing, if we should manage to hold ther upper hand here ther whisky in ther place would soon be gone, an' then what would we do?"

"That's so," said one of the rascals. "If there ain't no business done here there won't be any more stuff bought. It would soon be so we'd have to go to work again, or else starve. I'm in favor of quittin' myself."

As Dick Doolittle was taking the drink one of the men handed him, who should come up by him but Ike Boots, the horse thief, whom Young Wild West had set free the night before.

"I told you things would hum when Young Wild West got here," said Boots. "I could feel it in my bones when you set out fur ther stockyard. He's a sundowner, he is. Didn't he fix me, though! An' he'll fix everybody he runs

afoul of, too. He's quicker nor a wildeat, an' when he looks at yer mad-like you've got to be careful."

"I guess you're about right, Ike," Doolittle admitted. "But I think we kin fool him, fur all that. There ain't no use in puttin' up an open fight ag'in him, so what do you say if we do some sneak work?"

"Show me ther least chance to git even with him an' I'm with yer."

"Let's go an' set down; I've got a idea. Call Rags. He's a dandy at sneak work."

The man referred to was sitting at an adjoining table and was apparently one of the most sober ones in the place.

Ike Boots was well acquainted with him, it seemed, and he went over and touched him on the shoulder.

"Dick wants you to come an' have a talk with us," he said.

"All right," was the reply. "I'm jest in ther humor to talk, for I imagine I kin see a tree with a rope hangin' to a limb, or somethin' like that. We've gone it a little too taut, I think, an' I'm jest beginnin' to realize it."

"Well, come on in ther back room."

Rags, as he was called, got up and shook himself like a dog does when he comes out of the water.

It was easy to understand why he was called Rags, for his clothing was literally in rags.

That was the way he had been attired ever since he had made his appearance in Deadwood.

His face was pinched and drawn and a small pair of deep-set eyes gave him a shrewd and cunning expression.

The three walked into an adjoining room and sat down at a table.

"What's ther trouble, Dick?" and Rags shrugged his shoulders.

"We want to rig a plan to get square with Young Wild West."

"Ther young feller what tamed ther crowd up at ther stockyard, an' come mighty near puttin' ther finishin' touch to you?"

"Yes, he's ther one I mean."

"You want me to think of a way to git him where ther hair is short?"

"Well, I've got an idea myself, but I thought I'd better ask your opinion on it."

"Well, what's your idea?"

"There's a mighty putty gal not far from here an' one of Young Wild West's men is goin' to marry her afore ther cowboy band leaves town, so I hear."

"Yes, but what's that got to do with it?"

"Well, I've sorter took a notion to ther gal myself."

"You have, hey?"

"You took a notion to a gal, Dick?" exclaimed Ike Boots, in surprise.

"Yes, I'll own ther corn. She's sorter made my heart go pit-a-pat, an' I've thought of a scheme to git her, an' at ther same time give us a chance to git square on Young Wild West."

"Well, spit it out, Dick," said Rags, looking interested. "Your shanty is in a kinder lonesome place, ain't it?"

"Yes, it's about ther furthest shanty out of ther town to ther north."

"Well, s'posin' we steal ther gal to-night an' take her over to your shanty?"

"What would that have to do with gittin' square on Young Wild West?" asked Boots.

"A whole lot."

"I see ther point," spoke up Rags. "Young Wild West would come to look fur her."

"Certainly! Rags, you have got enough brains to see into things."

"Young Wild West would come to look fur her, an' then we could lay fur him an' put him out of existence."

"Oh!" exclaimed Boots. "I see into it now. Well, jest count on me to do ther business with yer. I reckon we've all got ourselves into trouble, as it is, an' ther only way fur us to do is to git square on someone. I hear ther sheriff has got ther names of more'n fifty of ther boys, an' they'll git it hot when ther cavalrymen gits here."

"Not so very hot, either," Doolittle assured them.

"Why not?" asked Rags.

"Well, accordin' to what Young Wild West says, we'll be let alone if we quit ther game right now."

"You mean if we stop shootin' an' tearin' houses down?"

"Yes, an' drinkin' up ther rum that don't belong to us."

"Well, if we do stop who'll pay fur ther damage we've done?"

"Ther owners will have to stand ther loss, that's all. What are they goin' to do about it?"

"Well, we may git off easy, but I'd rather not have my name on ther list ther sheriff's got."

"Never mind, now. We'll quit this game an' go into some business on our own hook—jest us three. What do you say?"

"Certainly!" cried Ike Boots.

"I'll be only too glad to go in business with you, Dick," said Rags.

"I'm satisfied that we kin make more money than we have foolin' around with this mob."

"You mean by gamblin'?" remarked Rags.

"Yes, some sharper business, an' when we git tired of that, do a little in ther masked highwayman game. We'd be able to work that a long time without bein' found out, an' I'll bet on it."

"We might if Young Wild West didn't git after us," said Boots.

"Young Wild West won't be able to git after us, 'cause he'll be dead!" exclaimed the leader of the trio.

"I see," said Rags. "You mean to do ther highwayman act after he's finished."

"That's it! Now, let's figure on a way to git ther gal, so Young Wild West kin have a chance to come out to look fur her. We've got to fix things jest right, you know. We've got to have it so he don't come with his whole cow-

boy band at his back, fur in that case we couldn't do much."

"I'll tell you what to do," spoke up Rags, as he scratched his head thoughtfully.

"What?"

"Things will be quieted down to-morrow, accordin' to what you say."

"Yes, I reckon they will."

"Well, do you know ther name of ther cowboy what's goin' to marry ther gal?"

"Yes, it is Willis. I heard Young Wild West call him that to-night."

"Good enough!" and Rags nodded approvingly. "Now, to-morrer mornin' I'll send a note to ther gal with this cowboy's name signed to it. I'm a dandy at writin' love-letters, or any other kind of letters, fur that matter. Well, when she gets ther letter she'll see that it is fur her to meet her lover right somewhere close to my shanty. She'll come all right, especially when she finds that ther majority of the men has gone back to work. Then I reckon we will have ther gal."

"Good enough! But how will we git Young Wild West?"

"In ther same way. I'll write a note to him an' sign ther gal's name to it. I kin write any kind of a hand. I may look like a lunkhead an' talk like a noodle, but I ain't, jest ther same. I was given a good education."

"I bet you was!" spoke up Ike Boots. "I wish I'd had ther same chance."

"What would you have amounted to if you had?" asked Rags, looking at him in disgust.

"I'd have been a millionaire by this time."

His two companions laughed.

"Well," observed Dick Doolittle after a pause, "it is gittin' mighty late. We'll fix things up in ther mornin'. Now, don't say a word about this to anyone; I've made up my mind to quit ther riotin' business, an' if we're careful what we do we will make lots of money in this new game of ours."

"You bet!" cried Ike Boots.

Rags nodded.

The three went out into the room where the liquor had been flowing so plentifully, and then Dick Doolittle gave the men another piece of advice about quitting the rioting business and went off to his home.

Before he parted from his two friends, however, it was understood that they should meet at the shanty of Rags at ten the following morning.

Things were very quiet in Deadwood when the sun arose the next day.

The owners of the hotel building were surprised when word came to them that the bad gang had quit making it their headquarters and advising them to go and take charge of it.

In a couple of hours' time everything looked different in the mining town.

The shops opened and began to do business.

Here and there a few men could be seen gathered in groups, but there were no signs of the reckless times of the preceding day.

The sheriff and his deputies went about the town and helped those who had been injured by the bad gang to straighten things out.

After this was done the head of the county and the officials of the town met and decided to offer a reward for Dick Doolittle's capture, dead or alive.

But it was decided that the offer was not to be made public until Young Wild West and his partners had been consulted.

They well knew that the young deadshot from Weston had been the real cause of the breaking up of the rioters.

All that he had done had traveled to their ears.

They were unanimous in deciding that someone must suffer for what had happened, and Dick Doolittle, being the leader of the mob, quite naturally was picked as the one.

While this consultation was taking place between the sheriff and the town officials Dick Doolittle was making his way to the shanty of Rags.

The villain went by a roundabout way so he would not be seen by many, for he had an idea that he was a marked man.

He realized more than ever now that he had made the mistake of his life when he led the mob in scattering death and destruction about the mining town.

But he was figuring on disguising himself and staying close for a few days.

But, first of all, he must have the pretty daughter of Pett, the expressman, and then the life of Young Wild West.

"I'd be willin' to quit ther town, then, if it got too warm fur me here," he muttered, as he cut across a patch of woods that ran almost up to the rear door of the shanty of Rags.

When he got there he found Ike Boots had arrived ahead of him.

"I come on horseback," said the villain. "I've been here over ten minutes."

"Let's git down to business," spoke up Rags. "I reckon we mustn't fool too long with this game if we're goin' to work it through."

"All right. Go ahead an' write ther letter to ther gal," said Doolittle.

Rags soon wrote it and then he went out to get a boy to deliver it.

CHAPTER VI.

WILD SHOWS THE BIG COW-PUNCHER A THING OR TWO.

Young Wild West's Cowboy Band passed a pretty comfortable night up at Dave Libby's stockyard.

Our hero had hardly expected that they would be troubled by any of the gang who had made such a commotion in town.

He knew that when the men came to think it over the most of them would be very glad to quit and go back to their work.

After the cowboys had enjoyed a good breakfast they felt in the best of humor.

A big, brawny cow-puncher in the employ of the stockman came up to Cheyenne Charlie and asked him for a light.

The scout gave it to him willingly enough.

"I reckon ther trouble is about over what the cow-puncher said."

"I reckon so," replied Charlie. "If it ain't, Young Wild West will soon put an end to it."

"It don't seem to me as though a boy could do as much as they say he's done," and the big man shook his head doubtfully.

"Wasn't you there to see it last night?"

"No, I was back tendin' to ther cattle. I've heard a whole lot about how he made Dick Doolittle hold up his hands, an' then yanked him from his horse an' made him a prisoner. That might all be so, but I'll bet there was others there to help him."

"Oh, there was others there to help him if he needed help," said the scout, quietly. "But he didn't happen to need any to 'tend to ther leader of ther rioters. Dick Doolittle is easy fur Young Wild West, my friend."

"They say he is awful strong an' quick fur a boy."

"Well, I reckon he's about strong an' quick enough for any man whatever wore boots."

Charlie looked at the cow-puncher's boots just as he said this.

The man must have taken it that he meant that he would stand no show in a mix-up with our hero.

"You don't think ther boy could handle me, do yer?" he asked, looking amazed.

"I reckon he could," was the cool retort.

"Why, my friend, I've wrastled with bulls, an' I've chucked 'em every time, too. What show would an ordinary man have with me, much less a boy?"

"That's where you make a mistake, my friend," Charlie hastened to say. "You say Young Wild West is nothin' but a boy. Others have thought ther same way, but they've found out that he's very much a man afore they got through with him. I'm not goin' to say that Wild is as strong as you are, but I'm dead sartin that he kin handle you as easy as pie!"

"You are, hey?" and the man showed signs of anger. "Well, I'd jest like to see him try it."

Wild happened to be walking that way just then, and he caught the last part of the conversation.

"What's the trouble here?" he asked, walking up to the two men.

"Here's a man who thinks it mighty strange that you got ther best of Dick Doolittle last night," answered Chey-

enne Charlie. "He says he's putty sure that you wouldn't stand no show if you tackled him. He's wrastled with bulls an' such like, you know."

"Oh! he has, eh? Well, I have not the least doubt but that he is a very strong fellow. What is your name, my friend, if I may ask?"

"They call me Big Roddy, ther cow-puncher," replied the man. "See here, Young Wild West, I don't want you to think fur a minute that I've got ther least thing ag'in yer. It ain't that what made me talk to your friend here. I was only thinkin' that it didn't look possible fur you to handle men around as I've heard say you could. I wouldn't think of such a thing as gittin' in a fight with you; it ain't in my line to fight, anyhow, an' I never does do it unless I'm made to. Then I generally gives a good account of myself."

"I understand you, I guess. You would just like to see me handle a big man like you, just so you would know how it was done. Is that it?"

"That's it exactly!" cried the big man, smiling all over his face.

"All right. Just come over here, where all hands can have a look at us and we'll try a wrestle."

"I won't hurt you," said Big Roddy. "I'm so much bigger than you are that I won't hurt you. I'll jest put you down easy-like."

"All right!" laughed our hero. "I won't hurt you much, either, intentionally. But I advise you to look out for yourself. You may go down pretty heavy when you do go, you know."

"I don't think you're half so strong as a crazy bull, young feller," and the big cow-puncher chuckled.

So did Cheyenne Charlie chuckle.

He knew what was coming, and he felt that he could describe it before it happened.

But he said nothing.

Nearly all the cowboy band knew Young Wild West was one of the greatest wrestlers that ever took hold of a man, and they simply waited to see the fun.

The cow-puncher was so big and ungainly that it could very easily be imagined that he was slower than molasses.

The big fellow pulled off his coat and Wild did likewise.

Then both took the weapons from their belts.

"Go ahead and take your hold, Young Wild West," said Big Roddy. "I'm goin' to give you all ther show in ther world."

"Very well," was the reply, and Wild stepped up and got him just where he wanted him. "Are you ready?"

"Yes!"

"Then away you go!"

There was a streak made by swinging legs and arms and the cow-puncher landed on his back upon the ground with a shock that took the breath from him.

"Great rattlesnakes!" he cried when he got his breath. "How did you do that, boy?"

"Quite easy. You made a mistake in giving me my

hold, you see. You should have made me give you your hold."

"You kin wrastle some, can't you?"

"Oh, I don't make a profession of it."

"Well, I s'pose you'll give me another chance?"

"Oh, yes! You can have as many chances as you like. How do you want to do it this time?"

"We'll run in an' grab our holds."

"That just suits me. Come on!"

They darted for each other, Wild feinting to the right and left as he did so.

His movements bewildered the big fellow, and before he was aware of it Wild had him again.

It was quite easy to put him down, and when he went he fairly jarred the ground.

It was fully half a minute before the defeated man got up, and when he did so he shook his head sadly.

"I made a mistake in sizin' you up, Young Wild West," he said. "But I will say that a man can't throw another unless he gits a hold of him."

"Oh, you would like to see what you could do if you get hold of me once?"

"Well, to tell ther truth, I would."

"Well, I will give you your own hold this time, providing you will tell me the very instant you are ready."

"I'll do that all right."

"Very well, then. Come on!"

Wild knew he had a regular giant in strength to buck against, but he depended on his quickness to carry him through.

As he gave Big Roddy his hold our hero was crouching a little, so he really appeared shorter than he was.

"Sing out when you are ready!" called out Wild, as he put his arms around his big opponent's waist.

"I'm ready now!" was the answer. "Go on an'—"

That was as far as he got, for Young Wild West straightened up to his full height as quick as a flash and Big Roddy was lifted clear of the ground.

Then over he went as though he was a log, landing flat on his back with the boy on top!

"Oh!" he grunted. "I've—I've got enough!"

"All right," said Wild, and he promptly arose to his feet.

The cow-puncher sat up until he recovered himself and then he accepted the hand of Wild and was helped up.

"I'm satisfied," he said, nodding right and left to make everyone understand that he meant it. "I kin understand now why Young Wild West kin tame a man so quick. I kin throw bulls, but I can't throw him."

He was not the least bit mad, and that made all hands think well of him.

Our hero put on his coat and belt and picked up his hat.

The big man was puffing like a porpoise, but he was as calm and undisturbed as a summer morning.

"They say you're a deadshot, Young Wild West," ob-

served Big Roddy a few minutes later. "Would you mind showin' me a thing or two about it?"

"In what way?" asked Wild.

"Oh, not in a fightin' way, certainly not! Can't you do some fancy shootin' at a mark, or somethin' like that?"

Our hero was just in the humor to please him.

Several of the other stockyard men had been watching the proceedings, and they seemed eager to see something else.

"Have you got a pipe?" he asked Big Roddy.

"Oh, yes!" was the reply.

"Just put it in your mouth and stand over there."

"What are you goin' to do?" and the man looked just a trifle uneasy.

"Oh, don't be alarmed. I am not going to shoot you."

"All right. I won't back down. Anything you say I'll do."

"Well, just put your pipe in your mouth and stand over there by that post."

The cow-puncher obeyed without another word.

"Now stand perfectly still and hold tight on the stem with your teeth."

His face turned a shade paler, but Big Roddy did just as he was told.

Young Wild West took a revolver from his belt.

Up it went, and then—

Crack!

A piece of the stem remained in the man's mouth, but the rest of the pipe was missing.

"That is pretty fair shooting, isn't it?" asked Wild, smiling at the astonished man.

"I should say so!" was the reply. "But I reckon that is all I want of it jest now."

"Oh, I am not through yet. I will clip that stem out of your mouth if you will let me."

"Not fur a ten-hundred-acre farm!" cried the cow-puncher. "I've seen all ther fancy shootin' I want to see. I've got to go back to my work, so you'll please excuse me."

Wild laughed heartily, his partners and the cowboy band joining in.

Big Roddy went away and he was soon forgotten.

Our friends cleaned their weapons and made things comfortable about their camp, after which Wild proposed to Charlie and Jim that they take a ride around town.

"Everything is so quiet," said he, "that I have an idea that Dick Doolittle has really kept his word."

"It looks that way," replied Dart.

"But I'll bet that feller ain't done with us yet," spoke up the scout. "You kin jest make up your minds that he ain't one of them kind that gives in so easy. He might have stopped ther riotin', but if he has it is because he thinks it will be better for him. We'll see an' hear more of him afore we leave Deadwood, see if we don't."

"Well, if he tries any of his games on us he'll get more than he is looking for," declared Wild.

They mounted their horses and were riding away when the sheriff came riding up.

Wild had met him on a former visit to Deadwood and he greeted him with a cheery good-morning.

The head of the county took off his hat and bowed as though he was before a general of the army.

"I've come over to see if you'll give us a little advice," said he. "I've had a conference with the town officials an' we've decided to offer a reward for Dick Doolittle. He's the man what led the mob, you know, an' he's got to have his neck stretched if we kin git him alive."

"Quite right and proper, I should say," retorted Wild. "How are things? Have the men gone back to their work?"

"Most all of 'em has. There's a bunch here an' there layin' around, waitin' to do mischief, I s'pose, but it won't take long to put 'em down, I reckon."

"No, I hardly think it will."

"What I want to ask you is, how soon should we make it public that I'm willin' to pay a reward for the capture of Dick Doolittle, dead or alive?"

Wild thought a moment.

"Suppose you wait until to-morrow," he said. "It might incite the mob to form again, and they could do a whole lot more damage. Besides, I may be able to get him for you before that time."

"Good!" exclaimed the sheriff. "I will do exactly as you say."

CHAPTER VII.

THE COWBOY BAND TO THE RESCUE.

The sheriff remained there until well toward noon.

He was a very talkative man, and Wild was willing to listen to him.

When he did get ready to go he invited them to go with him and fetch the musicians of the cowboy band along.

"They kin play a little then fur the town officials, who ain't heard 'em yet," the head of the county said.

"All right," retorted our hero. "Anything to please you. Come, boys! Just get your instruments ready."

The rain had cleared during the night and the sun was shining brightly, so there was nothing to interfere with the sound of the instruments.

The four players soon had them ready, and then mounting, they rode off with Wild and his partners and the sheriff.

They rode straight down to the building that was occupied by the town officials.

Men lounging on the street looked at them curiously as they went along, but no one offered to interfere with Young Wild West's Cowboy Band.

They went right into the main room of the building and the band played for them for fifteen minutes.

Quite a crowd collected outside and everyone was in a good humor.

After a talk with the town officials Wild and his friends started off on horseback.

"We will make a circle of the town and see what is going on," our hero said, and they proceeded to do so.

Unknowingly they took a route that would lead them directly to the shanty of the villain called Rags.

As they neared this place the sharp cry of a female in distress rang out.

It came from the woods right ahead of them.

Wild paused long enough to listen for the cry to be repeated, but as it was not he set out on a gallop in the direction it had come from.

The others followed him closely, and soon they came to the shanty.

Just as they reached it three masked men came out.

They were greatly surprised at the appearance of the horsemen and looked around for an avenue of escape.

One of them looked like the villain who had led the mob the day before, so our hero thought.

"Cover them, boys!" he cried. "Shoot the first man who tries to get away!"

"Stand still, you measly coyotes!" said Cheyenne Charlie. "I reckon you've struck a regular hornet's nest. Where's the woman we heard hollerin' jest now?"

The three men stood stock still in their tracks, and one of them, who was undoubtedly the leader, put on a defiant air.

"Where is the woman?" demanded Jim Dart.

There was no reply.

Young Wild West sprang from his horse and tore the mask from the face of the leader of the villainous trio.

"It is Dick Doolittle, the gambler!" he exclaimed. "Just as I thought, boys. Dismount and tie them up!"

The men obeyed with great alacrity.

Dick Doolittle did not put up any fight, for he saw how useless it was.

His companions were, of course, Ike Boots and Rags, and when our friends saw the scoundrel they were not a little surprised.

"So this is the way you are leading a better life, is it?" said Wild. "Going about with a mask on your face, eh? Now, tell me where the person is who uttered that scream a little while ago, or I'll let a streak of daylight through you!"

"She's in the shanty," replied the villain, with a faltering voice.

"What did you tell 'em fur?" shrieked Dick Doolittle. "Why didn't you let 'em find her?"

"They'd have done that soon enough. What's the use of bein' obstinate; it won't do us any good."

"That's right, Dick," spoke up Rags. "We're in fur it, so the easiest way is the best."

Wild made for the hut in a hurry.

He went inside and the first object he saw was the form of a girl, bound and gagged, lying on the floor.

He did not recognize her till he lifted her up.

Then he saw that the captive of the trio was no other than Tillie Pett, the sweetheart of Willis!

"Come here, Willis!" he cried, as he quickly released the gag from her mouth and severed the bonds that bound her hands behind her back.

The cowboy ran into the hut in a hurry.

The next instant his sweetheart was in his arms.

"Well, this does beat all!" exclaimed Cheyenne Charlie, as he looked at the three prisoners. "What won't happen, I wonder?"

"You fellers have got the upper hand now, but my turn is bound to come, see if it ain't?" cried Dick Doolittle, vindictively.

"Yes, your turn will come putty quick after ther sheriff gits hold of you," retorted the scout.

Meanwhile, Tillie Pett was getting calmer all the time and she was soon able to tell how she had been captured.

"I received this note from you," she said, producing a piece of paper containing writing and handing it to Willis, "and I set out to meet you."

"Set out to meet me!" gasped the cowboy. "Why, I didn't send this note to you, Tillie."

"No! I can see it all now. One of those villains wrote it just to get me to come here," she replied. "But I am so glad that you happened along just in time, Will."

"An' so am I!"

Wild took the note and saw that it was brief and to the point.

It stated that Willis thought it advisable for him not to come all the way to her house, and asked her to meet him near the shanty at the north end of the town as soon as possible.

The girl had not stopped to compare the writing with his, but had set out in a joyful frame of mind to meet her lover and had been beset by the three masked men, who quickly bound her, while one of them held a hand over her mouth to prevent her from making an outcry.

It was when they were placing the gag in her mouth after they got her inside the shanty that she got the opportunity to utter the cry.

It had been quite enough to bring our friends to the rescue, if it was only one cry.

"Now, boys," said Young Wild West, when it had all been understood, "we will take the three prisoners to the sheriff. I hardly think it will be necessary for him to offer a reward for Dick Doolittle now."

Cheyenne Charlie laughed.

"I reckon not," he remarked.

They tied lariats about the necks of the villains and then drove them like sheep toward the center of the town.

Willis took his sweetheart on his horse with him and rode along in the rear of the queer procession.

As they got into the town a crowd gathered and began to follow.

The majority of them were the rioters of the day before, too, but Wild was not the least bit alarmed.

He advised the men not to come too close, for he had an idea that they might make a move to release the prisoners.

But they did not, and a few minutes later they were turned over to the sheriff and lodged in the jail.

Then our friends proceeded on to the home of Tillie Pett.

As her mother knew nothing of the peril she had been in, she welcomed them with a happy smile.

But when Tillie told her how she had been deceived by the decoy note, the woman nearly fainted.

Pett came home while they were there and he was surprised to see them.

"What's the trouble now?" he asked, laughingly, for he saw they all wore smiling faces.

"Ther trouble is all over, I reckon," replied Cheyenne Charlie. "But there was some a little while ago."

Wild told Pett what had happened.

"The confounded villains!" exclaimed the expressman. "What do you suppose they did that for?"

"Dick Doolittle said he—he was going—going to marry me," spoke up the girl, blushingly.

"He was, hey?" cried Willis. "Well, I guess he'll get all the marrying he wants when that rope tightens around his neck. The villain! If I had known he had said anything like that I believe I would have choked him up there at the shanty."

"Never mind," spoke up Wild. "There has been no real harm done. I am going to make a suggestion if you will let me."

"What is it?" asked Tillie.

"Make arrangements for a wedding to take place inside of two days. To-morrow is Saturday, why can't it take place to-morrow night?"

"It kin, if she's willin'," spoke up Willis.

The girl put her head on her mother's shoulder and remained silent.

"What do you say, Miss Pett?" called out our hero. "Come! you may as well say yes and have it over with."

"Yes," she answered softly.

"Hooray!" yelled honest-hearted Willis. "I'm ther happiest man west of ther Mississippi, an' I know it! Hooray!"

The cowboys joined in and gave a cheer that made the rafters ring.

A few minutes later all of our friends but Willis left the house and went back to their quarters at the stock-yard.

Just as they got there they heard the shrill notes of a bugle.

"Ther soldiers are comin', I reckon," said Cheyenne Charlie. "Well, I rather think they ain't exactly needed, for ther tune we've been playin' since we've been in Deadwood has sorter straightened things out."

"We will keep right on with the same tune as long as we are here, I guess," answered Jim Dart. "Wild seems

to enjoy the way we have been doing, and I am sure that I do."

"An' so do we all!" exclaimed the scout.

A couple of minutes later a troop of cavalry came up and halted near the stockyard.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE THREE VILLAINS ESCAPE FROM JAIL.

The jail at Deadwood at the time of which we write was not a very imposing structure, neither was it large.

But it was supposed to be a strong one, and if a prisoner made his escape from it he was called a good one.

It was entirely devoid of prisoners when Dick Doolittle, Ike Boots and Rags were placed in it.

The three were put in what was called the big strong-room together, and two men were left to guard them.

Stripped of their weapons, the three villains had little chance of escaping the punishment that would be accorded them.

Justice was swift in Deadwood, and Dick Doolittle knew that he would be hanged unless he got out of the jail.

He meant to get out.

There was only one way to do it, and that was to get assistance from the jailers.

He knew both men well, as he had gambled at the same table with them on more than one occasion.

The door to the big strongroom had four iron bars across an opening two feet square, which admitted the only light that got into the place, and that from the windows that were in the adjoining room, where the jailers were supposed to remain on guard.

In addition to a big padlock, there were two heavy iron bolts that held the door secure.

The three villains were very quiet for fully ten minutes after they were placed there, but at the expiration of that time Dick Doolittle called out to the jailers:

"Say, you fellers!"

"What do you want?" asked one of them.

"You ain't goin' to leave us be in here, are you?" he said.

"Let you be in there? Why, I should reckon so!" exclaimed the other one.

"But you don't have to, you know very well. Hangin' ain't a very nice thing to think about, let alone have it done to you. I don't want to be hanged, boys."

"I don't s'pose you do," Number One admitted.

"Of course not," added Number Two.

"I've got over three thousand dollars an' a diamond pin an' a watch an' chain that's worth a couple of hundred on me, an' Boots an' Rags ain't nothin' like bein' busted."

The jailers looked a bit interested when they heard this.

"It will be yours—ther whole business of it if we git out," went on the leader of the mob in a persuasive voice.

"Don't talk so loud," admonished Number One.

"It would be impossible to do it," said Number Two, shaking his head.

"Nothin' is impossible," insisted Dick Doolittle, working on the point he had gained. "Nothin' is impossible in a case of this here kind, anyhow."

The two jailers remained silent.

"S'pose you was to come in here putty soon to give us somethin' to eat, which we'd called fur, an' we punched at yer an' got yer down an' tied an' gagged yer? How would that be?"

"I don't know about that," answered Number One, doubtfully. "If I didn't know you so well, an' had always thought putty well of you I wouldn't listen to no such talk."

"Nor me, either," added the other.

"Well, it would be jest as easy as anything," spoke up Rags. "We could tie you up, an' you'd be here till someone come. Then you could easy tell 'em how you was surprised. You'd better take our money first an' hide it somewhere, though. Then you could git it later."

The last words touching on the money question decided the thing.

The two jailers talked in whispers for a minute or two, and then Number One said:

"Well, we'll take ther risk, providin' that if you're caught ag'in you won't say anything about how we let you git away."

"We'll never say a word, not if they hang us!" declared the villainous trio.

Then the jailers, who were rascally fellows, anyhow, talked together a little more.

One of them went to the door and took a look around.

"There is too many around fur you fellers to git away now," he said. "I don't see how it is goin' to do you any good if you git out of ther jail."

"We'll take ther chances," answered Dick Doolittle. "You've got some hats an' coats around here that we could put on to make us look different, I reckon. We could take your two hats an' coats, anyhow."

"I've got an idea," spoke up Number Two, suddenly. "There's ther horse an' covered wagon out back in ther barn. I was to go to ther store this afternoon fur our week's supplies. You could take that an' git away, I'll bet!"

"I'll bet we could, too!" exclaimed Ike Boots. "Well, here's all ther money I've got, 'cept a few dollars that I'll need to run me till I git hold of somethin'. There's a little over two hundred fur yer."

"An' here's three hundred," spoke up Rags. "I ain't so bad off as some folks might have thought."

"An' here's three thousand dollars," added Dick Doolittle, producing a roll of bills. "If you want my watch an' diamond pin, you're welcome to 'em; but if you should happen to be found with 'em it might make it look a little bad fur yer."

"That's so," and the two men shook their heads.

"I guess you'd better keep ther watch an' diamond," said one.

"That's right," chimed in the other.

The money was handed over and the two rascally jailers carefully concealed it on their persons.

They put it in the linings of their coats, in their shoes and in their tobacco pouches after they had divided it equally.

"I guess it is all right," remarked Number One. "They won't know but that we had ther money afore, if they should happen to find it on us."

Dick Doolittle nodded.

Number Two went out and took a look around again.

He reported all right when he came in.

"I reckon ther sheriff is over at ther corner ginmill havin' a good time," said his companion. "Now, we'll git ther ropes an' ther gags ready. You want to fix one of us so we kin holler out in case no one comes along very soon."

"All right," answered the mob leader. "Jest come in here an' we'll fix you up."

With just the least show of hesitation, the two jailers unlocked the heavy door and walked into the strongroom.

The three villains went right at work at them.

In five minutes they had them bound and gagged so it was impossible for either of them to give the alarm.

"You might take it in your head to holler afore we wanted yer to," said Rags, with a grin. "Now, then, I'll jest take this here stool an' bat you both over ther heads a couple of times to make it look as though it was real."

The villain suited the action to the words and dealt the two helpless jailers blows that were almost sufficient to stun them.

This was not to their liking, but the two men who had betrayed their trust were in for it now.

The three scoundrels took their weapons, and then going out into the other room, possessed themselves of what clothing there was to be found and changed their appearance.

"I reckon we better git our money back," observed Dick Doolittle, as they were ready to go. "It ain't no use of goin' away from here almost busted."

"That's so!" exclaimed Ike Boots, and he made a dive for the helpless jailers.

While they writhed and struggled, the money was taken from the hiding-places about them and then with a mocking laugh the leader of the trio exclaimed:

"Boys, we're ever so much obliged to you. Goodby!"

Out of the jail they sneaked into the rear lot.

The barn was very close to the building and they soon were in it, hitching the horse to the covered wagon.

They soon got ready, and then Ike Boots, who looked more like one of the jailers than either of his companions, got on the seat, and, taking the lines, drove out of the jail-yard on the street.

It was quite a daring thing to do, but the villains were willing to take any sort of a risk to save their necks.

They met plenty of people, but Boots drove on in an un-

concerned way, while his companions lay in the back of the wagon.

Boots carried out his part well, for he did not attempt to drive fast, and even lighted his pipe as the horse jogged along.

But he did not drive to the store.

Instead, he took a sort of trail that ran off to the right, and once into the woods he let the horse go at a faster gait.

"We oughter run across one of ther gang in a few minutes," he said. "An' if we do we kin send fur ther horses. Then I reckon we'll be all right."

"We'd better send fur somethin' to make us look different," spoke up Dick Doolittle. "If we had our horses we'd give ourselves away putty quick."

"Why can't we go to ther Injun camp that's out here?" suggested Rags. "I reckon they'd fix us up an' let us have horses if we was to pay 'em enough. They wouldn't tell on us, either."

"Good!" cried Dick Doolittle. "Rags, you've certainly got a great head on you, an' no mistake!"

"That's a fact," and Boots nodded in a delighted manner. "Ther camp ain't far from here, so I reckon we'd better turn ther horse aroun' an' start him back fur ther jail."

"Yes. Is everything all right?" queried the leader.

"There ain't a soul in sight."

"Then out we go!"

All three sprang out of the wagon, and then Boots took the horse by the head and turned it around.

"Git ap!" he cried, as he struck the animal a smart blow with a switch he broke from an overhanging limb. "Light out! You've done your part."

Away went the horse, the wagon rattling along as though there was a hurry call somewhere.

The villains soon came to a well-beaten path that ran through the woods, and, taking it, hurried along.

In ten minutes they came in sight of a small camp of Indians.

A number of mongrel dogs set in to bark when they approached, but they were used to coming in contact with such curs, so they paid little or no attention to them.

The camp had been there for nearly a month.

The Indians were Sioux, and they had been making their living by selling game to the miners and stealing all they could.

Dick Doolittle and his two companions were not any more acquainted with them than the average resident of Deadwood, but they well knew the nature of a redskin.

Money would do almost everything with them.

Two old squaws hastened to meet them the moment they entered the limits of the camp.

"What paleface braves want?" said one.

"We want to see your chief," replied the leader of the trio. "We want to see him right away, too."

He handed each of the squaws a silver dollar.

They ran to the most gaudy of the tepees in the camp as though their very lives depended upon it.

The next minute a dirty-looking Indian attired principally in a faded army blanket and wearing a tangled mass of eagle feathers in his hair, appeared.

The three had followed the squaws and were right near the tepee when he came out.

"How?" said he in the Indian fashion of greeting a pale-face friend.

"Putty good," answered Doolittle. "Chief, we want to talk to you a few minutes."

Out came a handful of money, which was held before the chief's eyes.

"Ugh! Palefaces come inside tepee!" exclaimed the red-skin.

They lost no time in accepting the invitation.

"Chief," said Doolittle, handing him the money he had in his hand, which must have easily amounted to a hundred dollars, "we want you to help us. Ther sheriff is after us, an' is goin' to hang us if he catches us."

"What for?" asked the chief, as he took the money and began counting it.

"Because we was at ther head of ther gang what made things howl in ther town the last couple of days."

"Ugh!" grunted the redskin, when he had found how much there was in the roll. "Yellow Arm friend of palefaces. He help 'em."

"Good! Now, jest fix us up so we look like Injuns an' let us hide here in camp fur awhile, an' you'll git as much more money as I jest give you. We must have good grub while we're here, though."

"Palefaces talk wise. They shall be treated right."

Evidently the chief was not going to divide the money with any of his followers, for he proceeded to fix up the three fugitives from jail himself.

He had a mixed assortment of clothing in the tepee and he picked out what he thought would suit them best and told them to put on the togs.

When they had done so he got a handful of berries, and, squeezing the juice from them, proceeded to darken their faces and hands.

Twenty minutes later the three villains would scarcely have been recognized.

CHAPTER IX.

OUR FRIENDS ARE FOOLED.

When Young Wild West made his appearance before the troop of cavalry the captain instantly dismounted and hurried toward him with a welcoming smile.

"How do you do, Wild?" he cried. "I hardly expected to meet you here in Deadwood."

"Nor did I expect to meet you, Captain Darling," retorted our hero, as he shook hands warmly with him. "I

took a little run over with my cowboy band and got here just as there was a riot in progress. How have you been, captain?"

"Fine!" was the answer. "Things have been pretty dull for the past month, and when we got word from the sheriff that troops were wanted here to quell a disturbance we came in short order. The mob has quieted down, I suppose?"

"Yes, quite considerable."

"I suppose you had something to do with quieting them?"

"Well, my cowboy band had something to do with it, I suppose. We played a tune for them that seemed to charm a lot of them."

Wild was really pleased to meet the captain of the troopers.

He had become acquainted with him over a year before, and they had been through an Indian campaign together.

He told him just what the situation in Deadwood was, and suggested that it would be a good idea for the cavalry to ride through the town before night and let the people see them.

Captain Darling said he would do this, and then, after a little further talk, he decided to camp right there.

The troopers were a jolly lot of fellows, and they soon became on very friendly terms with the cowboys.

Wild sent one of his men for the sheriff, and then he told the four musicians to go ahead and play some music.

It was thoroughly enjoyed by all, and when the sheriff got there he leaped off his horse and danced a breakdown for them.

He was very glad to see the cavalrymen, for now he was certain that things would be straightened out in the town in short order.

"I reckon we've got ther ones we want," he said, when he got down to talking business. "Dick Doolittle is safe in ther jail. There will be a hangin' afore to-morrer night, fur I reckon it won't take but a few minutes to git a jury that'll convict him."

The sheriff then started in and related the whole circumstances connected with the riot.

It took him some little time to do this, as he went into details.

It was along about four in the afternoon when he said he guessed he would go down to the jail and see how things were.

He had just mounted his horse when a man came running up all out of breath.

"Ther prisoners has got outer ther jail!" he panted excitedly, and then he paused because he could say nothing further just then.

"What!" roared the astonished sheriff, while our friends and cavalry captain looked in surprise at the messenger.

"That's jest what's ther matter," said the man, when he had recovered. "Dick Doolittle an' ther other two fellers has got out of jail!"

"How in thunder is that?" yelled the sheriff, flying into

a rage. "Where was ther two men I left there in charge of 'em?"

"They tied an' gagged 'em afore they went. They took ther horse an' wagon out of ther barn an' got away that way. Ther horse come back without anyone drivin' him, an' that's how they come to find it out."

"That's what I calls putty tough!" observed Cheyenne Charlie. "After we caught 'em so nice, too! Sheriff, you must be runnin' a queer sort of jail to let such men as that to stay an' guard your prisoners."

"I don't understand it," said the sheriff, shaking his head in a puzzled way. "Ther guards shouldn't have gone in by 'em at all. There was room enough between ther bars in ther door to hand grub into them; an', then what made 'em let ther scoundrels git ther best of 'em, anyhow?"

"Perhaps they wanted them to," observed our hero, quietly.

"You mean that perhaps the jailers let them go and suffered themselves to be bound and gagged just for a blind?" spoke up Captain Darling.

"Such a thing might be. I won't say that it was, but I should like to question the two men who were on guard, just the same."

"Well, I reckon you kin do that, Young Wild West!" cried the sheriff, who was now as mad as a wet hen. "Jest git on your horse an' ride over to ther jail with me, will you?"

"Oh, yes! I will do that," replied Wild.

"I guess we will all take a ride over that way," spoke up the cavalry captain.

"That's right!" exclaimed Young Wild West. "Come on, boys!"

When he said this it meant that the entire band of cowboys were to go.

They got a hustle on them and were soon mounted and ready.

Then the troopers and cowboys, with Young Wild West and the sheriff at their head, started for the main street of the town.

Their appearance created considerable excitement.

Men left their work to find out what it was all about, and the rascals who had taken part in the riot began to tremble in their boots.

"Go right ahead and lead the boys," Wild said to the scout when they neared the jail. "I will go with the sheriff and try to find out something about this escaping business."

"All right," replied Charlie.

"We will take a little ride through the town, just to show them that we are here and ready for business," said Captain Darling, as our hero and the sheriff turned off.

"That's right. We will meet at the stockyard again, I suppose?"

"Yes; I shall make my headquarters there while we stay in Deadwood."

The bugle sounded and then our hero turned for the jail with the sheriff.

When they got there quite a crowd hung about the entrance.

The two men who had been found bound and gagged were the center of attraction and were explaining how it all happened.

Of course, they did not tell the whole truth; it would not have been good policy for them to do so.

The minute Wild laid eyes on them he felt satisfied that they were keeping something back.

"You are what I call two putty galoots to go an' let them fellers git away like that!" thundered the sheriff when he reached the center of the crowd and paused before the two keepers of the jail.

"Couldn't be helped, sheriff," said one. "We hadn't ther least idea they was goin' to go fur us. I opened ther door to—"

"What in thunder did you open ther door fur?" interrupted the sheriff. "Didn't you know that Dick Doolittle is about as desperate a galoot as lives in Deadwood? What did you open ther door fur?"

"Well, we was—"

"Never mind tellin' me. What I want to know is, what did you open ther door fur? There was no need of doin' it, an' it's a pity they didn't shoot you dead when you done it!"

"Let me talk to them," interposed our hero, stepping up to the two men.

"Go ahead, Young Wild West. I don't care if you put a bullet or two through 'em. They're ther two biggest fools I've seen in many a day!"

Wild now fixed his eyes on those of one of the men.

"What were you doing when the three men attacked you?" he asked.

"I had a pitcher of water in my hand, which I was goin' to hand to my mate, so he could give it to Dick Doolittle," was the reply, while the fellow showed unmistakable signs of being uneasy.

"Who did they pounce on first, you or your partner?"

"They jumped on him first."

"What did you do then?"

"I dropped ther pitcher an' tried to help my pard."

"Did the pitcher break when it struck the stone floor?"

The man became confused at this.

"I—I don't know," he answered, hesitatingly.

"Sheriff, just go inside and see if the pitcher broke," Wild said, quietly.

The sheriff did so.

"No!" he shouted from ther door. "Ther pitcher ain't broke, an', what's more, it's on ther tray in ther corner jest where I left it last night with a bunch of flowers stickin' in it."

"Just about what I thought," said Wild. "This man is telling an untruth, sheriff. I am satisfied of that."

The face of the man turned ashen.

"I forgot," he hastened to say. "I didn't have ther pitcher when they jumped on us. I was goin' to git it."

"That's right," spoke up the other fellow.

"I guess you had better tell the truth in this matter," our hero retorted. "It will be all the better with you in the end. If the sheriff finds that you let the villains go he might take a notion to hang you fellows in place of them."

This so enraged the man who had said but little that he made a leap for the boy and tried to grab him by the throat.

Wild promptly knocked him down with a blow of his fist.

"If you feel like trying that, just do so," he said, turning coolly to the other.

"You ain't got no right to accuse us of somethin' we didn't do," was the reply.

"Well, I wouldn't accuse you if I didn't feel certain of it. You see, I have a way of reading people pretty well, and I can't help thinking that you fellows set the prisoners free. As I helped to capture them, I feel a little interested in them, and I am not going to allow anyone who aided them to go around free in this town. The proper place for you two is the cell the others came out of."

"An' that's jest where they'll go, if you say ther word!" exclaimed the sheriff.

The man who had been knocked down was on his feet again now, and though he made no move to renew the attack he was evidently waiting to get a chance at Wild.

When the sheriff spoke about locking them up he suddenly whipped out a revolver and fired at our hero.

But Young Wild West divined his intention, and, dropping suddenly, the bullet went over his head and struck a man behind him in the shoulder.

The man dropped with a howl of pain.

Then Wild shot upward like a cat and knocked the weapon from the rascal's hand.

Realizing that it was all up with him, the jailer grappled with the boy and strove to throw him from him, so he could get away.

But he had made a big mistake.

Young Wild West let himself loose, to use the expression, and in less than two seconds the fellow was on his back.

Then with apparent ease he disarmed him.

"Put him in the lockup, sheriff," he said, calmly. "That is the place for him."

"Right you are, Young Wild West!" was the reply.

There were willing hands to help the sheriff, and in less than two minutes both the jailers were in the strongroom where the three scoundrels had escaped from.

Once there they broke down and confessed just what they had done.

Wild listened to them with a smile of contempt.

"If ever two men were served aright, you are the two," he said. "You might have known that they would take the money back after they had you in their power. Oh!

such fellows as you are ought to be sent away to some country where no one but fools exist."

"Say! let us out, won't you? We've both got families to look after!" pleaded the one who had fired at our hero.

"I guess not!" roared the sheriff. "You shot a man, an' it ain't known yet whether he's goin' to live or die. If he does die, then you'll swing!"

Then the pair began to cry like a couple of schoolboys.

"Come!" said Wild, turning to the sheriff. "Just place someone you can trust in charge of the jail, and we will start out to hunt up the scoundrels who escaped. It won't do to allow them to be running about the country."

"I reckon it won't," was the retort. "I'll soon have my nephew here. I've sent fur him. I'll leave him an' three deputies in charge, an' then we'll commence ther hunt. It ain't likely that they have gone so far, since they left ther horse an' wagon an' took out on foot."

"It may be that they have stolen horses to ride away," said Wild. "We must find out."

A few minutes later the two were riding in the direction the wagon had gone when it came out of the jailyard.

Out on the main street they met the cowboys and cavalrymen.

Young Wild West called Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart and told them what was in the wind.

Then they set out on the trail in earnest.

There were several to show them where the jail-wagon turned off from the street, and they were not long in finding the tracks made by it, since the ground was soft and wagons seldom went that way.

When they came to the place where it had been turned around and started on the back track Wild called a halt.

He dismounted and made a search about the spot, but was forced to acknowledge that he could not tell which direction the three villains had taken.

"They went into the woods, that's certain," he said. "But which way—that is the question?"

"Maybe they went to git horses somewhere," suggested the sheriff.

"Yes, but where would they be apt to get them around here?"

"I don't know, unless they got 'em from ther Injuns what's camped back here. They had plenty of money, you see."

"That looks reasonable. Just take us to the Indian camp."

"It's right over this way, and the sheriff headed his horse in the proper direction.

In a short time they came in sight of the camp.

Several braves and squaws came to meet them and asked them what they wanted to buy.

Wild thought he would try a little strategy on them.

He knew that if Dick Doolittle and his companions had bought horses of them they surely had cautioned the redskins to remain quiet about it.

"Have you got any more horses to sell?"

"Yes," answered one of them. "Me tell Yellow Arm, the chief. He sell you horses."

The chief soon came out to them.

"We want two horses, the same as the three you sold this afternoon," said our hero, watching him keenly.

He knew quite well that an Indian's face is like a stone when he wants to keep still on a certain subject.

"Me sell no horses to-day," replied the redskin, shaking his head and not moving a muscle of his face to show that he was surprised or whether he expected the question to be asked.

"Yes, yer did," spoke up the sheriff. "You sold three horses to ther three scoundrels what got out of ther jail this afternoon."

The Indian shrugged his shoulders.

"How Yellow Arm know that men got out of jail?" he asked.

"Then you'll admit that you sold them horses?"

"Yes, me sell horses two hours ago. Men pay good price and go away. They say not to tell, but me know you, sheriff, so me tell you."

"Which way did they go?" questioned Wild, believing that the chief was telling the truth.

The Indian pointed to the trail that led off to the southeast.

"They go that way," he said.

"They've got a putty good start on us, I reckon," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

"That's so," nodded Jim Dart. "What are you going to do about it, Wild?"

"Catch them!" was the quick reply.

Then our hero took a good look about the dirty camp and turned his horse around.

It was one of the few times in his life that Young Wild West was deceived by Indian cunning, for the three villains were right there in camp.

CHAPTER X.

WILD LEARNS A WHOLE LOT.

Young Wild West and his two partners and the sheriff soon left the Indian camp and started the way the chief had told them the three men had gone.

They followed the road until after darkness set in, and then they came upon a party of miners riding toward Deadwood.

From them they learned that no horsemen had been met, and then Wild began to think that perhaps the Indian chief had lied to them.

When he had talked with the miners a few minutes he came to the conclusion that it would have been impossible for the three villains to have passed them, as the trail ran over a dangerous part of the mountain where the meeting would most likely have occurred, and there was no other way for them to go.

"Boys," said our hero, turning to his companion, "I guess we have been fooled."

"It looks that way," Jim Dart admitted.

"If we have that Injun chief wants to look out for himself," observed Cheyenne Charlie. "I'll pull all ther feathers out of his hair, ther measly coyote!"

It was soon decided that they should ride back with the miners, and they accordingly did so.

It was late when they reached Deadwood, and, parting company with the miners at one of the hotels and leaving the sheriff at the jail, our friends went to their camp in the stockyards.

"How did yer make out?" queried Sam Spud.

"Rather bad, I guess," replied Wild, who was not in a disposition to talk just then.

When he got deceived by anyone he generally felt angry over it until it was straightened out.

And he meant to straighten this matter out by catching the three villains.

Cheyenne Charlie gave the cowboys all the information they wanted in his own peculiar way, and they vowed that they were ready to go on a hunt for Dick Doolittle at any time.

Wild heard them expressing themselves in this way, so he said:

"I will let you know when to start on the hunt. As soon as I have something to eat I am going out to try and locate them. I am going alone."

It was a pretty late supper that our hero had, but he did not seem to mind the delay.

The fact was that he was used to such things.

When he got through he picked up his rifle and started away on foot.

Both Cheyenne Charlie and Jim Dart would have been pleased to go with him, but they did not ask him.

They knew his ways pretty well by this time, and they realized his object in going out alone.

He had been deceived by the Indian chief, and there was where he was bound.

They were right on this.

Young Wild West was going to pay a visit to the Indian camp unknown to those in it.

He was going to find out what had become of the three villains who had made their escape from the jail if he possibly could.

It was past the hour of ten when our hero reached the outskirts of the camp.

So cautious had he been in his approach that the dogs did not even hear him.

Closer and closer he worked his way, and soon he was within twenty feet of the tepee occupied by the chief.

That was the point he had been working for.

He was lying flat on the ground now, and between two other tepees.

He could hear heavy breathing in both tepees, and that told him that the occupants were asleep.

But Yellow Arm, the chief, had not turned in yet, for

he was seated on a log, smoking and talking with three seeming Indian braves, who lounged on their blankets before him.

When Wild got himself into a comfortable position he settled down to listen and hear what the chief and his companions were talking about.

It was just about that time that one of the three on the ground laughed.

Young Wild West gave a start.

"That was the laugh of a white man," he muttered. "Ah! I guess I'm on the right track now. I'll just venture a little closer. If I do get caught I'm not afraid of any such a gang as that."

He moved toward a clump of bushes that was right at the side of the chief's tepee, and then once more he settled down to listen.

"Ugh!" he heard the chief say, "Palefaces no get Indians in trouble. If they want to steal away the paleface maiden they must not bring her to the camp of Yellow Arm. Yellow Arm wants to stay here with his braves and his squaws, because he can make money here."

"Well," said the voice of Dick Doolittle, which Wild recognized without the least difficulty, "you see how easy it was to fool Young Wild West to-day. I reckon it could be done ag'in, all right. You are a smart chief, Yellow Arm, an' you kin make money by helpin' me in ther scheme I've got in my head. I want to steal ther gal jest when she's all ready to git married to ther cowboy to-morrer night. I kin work it, I know I kin, fur Rags is goin' to put in his best licks, an' when he does that we can't be beat. Ike, he's somewhat slow, but he knows enough to do what he's told. What we want to do is to sneak into ther house where ther weddin' is to take place an' git ther gal when she's gittin' ready to be married. They'll be waitin' fur her to come downstairs an' she'll be miles away afore they find out she ain't there. I jest want to do it this way to show Young Wild West that he ain't ther smartest feller in ther world, not by any means."

"He might be fooled, but he ain't ther one to stand up before when there's any shootin' to be done," spoke up another of the disguised trio, whom Wild instantly recognized as Ike Boots. "But I reckon it ain't goin' to be sich a hard thing to do to git ther gal, as they won't be thinkin' of such a thing as us bein' around. It'll be an easy thing to do, chief. All's you've got to do is to let us have ther horses an' not say anything about it. You lied to-day fur us, an' I reckon you kin do it ag'in, providin' you're paid fur it."

The redskin thought a moment and then retorted:

"All right. Palefaces can have horses for thousand dollars."

"Good enough!" exclaimed the three villains in a breath.

Wild felt like making his presence known, but a thought struck him by which he could make things turn out better.

"I'll let them go ahead with their game," he said to himself. "They will get nipped just as they think they have everything their own way. I'll let them get right to the

house to-morrow night and then I will appear before them so suddenly that their heads will swim, I'll bet!"

Having arrived at this conclusion, he laid there and listened to all they had to say.

From their conversation he got the full details of what they proposed to do.

It was certainly a novel, not to say daring plan.

The three villains were to sneak into the Pett house in the early part of the evening and wait for an opportunity to catch the girl.

They expected to have a good chance while she was getting ready for the ceremony.

They figured on her mother being with her, but they meant to overpower her and bind and gag her.

Then from a window they would lower the helpless form of the bride and ride off with her to some wild spot to marry him.

This was the latest scheme of the villainous gambler, and he thought it a good one.

Wild thought it was not.

Our hero crept away from the camp with a smile on his face.

"We'll see all about it to-morrow night, Dick Doolittle," he muttered. "There will be a lively time at the wedding, I'll bet! My cowboy band will play the same old tune, too!"

He hurried along through the woods and soon reached the stockyard.

"How did you make out, Wild?" Cheyenne Charlie asked.

"First rate, Charlie," was the reply.

"Have you got any idea where the three scoundrels are?" spoke up Jim Dart.

"Yes."

"When are we goin' to chase 'em up?" queried the scout.

"We won't have to do that. They will come right to us."

"What!" cried his two partners in a breath.

"That's just it, boys. They will come right to us, and all we will have to do is to grab them."

"Is that a fact, Wild?" Charlie asked, looking in surprise at our hero.

"Just wait and you will see that it is."

"Oh, tell us somethin' what you've found out, won't you?"

Wild concluded that he had better, or they would not sleep any that night.

So he told them just what he had seen and heard at the camp of the Indians.

"Ah!" exclaimed Charlie, when he had finished. "So that's how it is? Well, when we git them three fellers we oughter go an' make ther redskin chief know a thing or two. I ain't a citizen of Deadwood, but I've come to ther quick conclusion that he ain't got no right around here. He's got to sneak an' take his gang with him, jest as sure as my name is Cheyenne Charlie!"

"That is certain," nodded our hero.

"I hate a redskin, anyhow, an' when one is smart enough to fool me, I hate him worse than ever."

"Well, never mind about it now. It is something that will keep. We will go to sleep, and to-morrow we will make all arrangements. Things are going to turn out all right, boys. Our visit to Deadwood is going to be a howling success."

"An' ther folks will remember ther tune Young Wild West's Cowboy Band played for a long while to come," chuckled the scout.

"You bet they will!" added Jim.

They said nothing to any of the cowboys that night, but went to sleep in their quarters.

The next morning they were up at the usual time, and after breakfast Wild called Willis aside and told him what was in the wind.

The cowboy was much surprised and agitated when he heard of the foul plot to steal his bride, but he was soon reassured.

"Don't you worry a bit," said our hero. "And don't you say a word to the young lady until I tell you what to say to her. This is important, as I don't want anything to leak out."

"You can depend on it that I will do exactly as you say, sir," Willis declared earnestly.

"The wedding is going through just as it is planned for, with the exception that there will be an interruption of a few minutes, so you have nothing to worry over."

"All right, sir."

After awhile Wild mounted his horse and rode into town to see the sheriff.

He found him at the jail talking with a couple of men from the express bank.

Then he was gratified to learn that the loss from the raid on the bank amounted to absolutely nothing.

The rioters had failed to get into the vault, and, beyond the smashing of glass and a slight damage to the building, nothing was wrong.

But the men were very anxious that the leader of the mob should be caught and punished.

"We'll have him if he kin be had, won't we, Young Wild West?" exclaimed the sheriff.

"Oh, we will have him soon enough," our hero replied, with a smile. "Just take it easy, and inside of twenty-four hours Dick Doolittle will be in jail, or else dead."

"You seem to be pretty positive of that, by the way you talk," observed one of the men from the bank.

"Well, I am," was the reply.

"Do you know where he is?"

"Well, that is a leading question. I will attend to him—that ought to be sufficient."

"Yes, but—"

"You'd better keep still," interrupted the sheriff. "Young Wild West is a feller what never tells everyone his own business."

"But this is our business, more than anyone else's just now," insisted the man.

"Well, if that is the case, why don't you make it your business to catch the leader of the rioters, then?" said Wild. "You may consider it your business, but I don't. You just stated that not a cent in cash was taken from the bank."

"But we want the villain punished, just the same."

"Why don't you punish him, then?"

Wild was getting a little nettled.

"Well, if you know where he is you should be compelled to tell," went on the man.

"Well, if you think you can make me tell, go ahead and do so!"

"You are rather impudent for a boy, I think."

"And I think you are rather impudent for a man."

"I've a notion to slap your face and teach you a little manners. If it were not that you had your belt full of weapons I believe I would do so."

Young Wild West quickly unbuckled his belt and laid it on a table.

"Go ahead and slap my face!" he said, walking up to the insulting fellow.

"I will!" almost shrieked the banker, who was now as mad as a hornet.

He made an effort to do it, but failed.

Wild caught him by both arms and shook him as a terrier shakes a rat.

"I won't hit you," he said, coolly. "You are too innocent for that. Now, sit down and behave yourself."

Bang!

The man went down into a chair behind him with such force that the bottom was nearly driven in.

Malcolm was a very dazed man for a minute or two.

Then he got up,

"I want to apologize," he said, putting out his hand.

"It isn't necessary," retorted our hero, not noticing the proffered hand. "Sheriff, when you are through with these men I would like to speak to you on important business."

The men from the bank were a very crestfallen couple.

It dawned upon them then that Young Wild West had come to impart to the sheriff the information he had in regard to Dick Doolittle.

"Good-day, gentlemen!" they said, and then they passed out.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the sheriff before they were out of hearing. "Young Wild West, if you didn't serve that feller jest right I never seen anyone what was! I reckon they oughter be satisfied ther way it is now. A hundred dollars will fix ther bank buildin' all right agin, an' what's ther use of makin' a big time about it? Deadwood ain't Chicago, or even Denver. We've got to take things as they come here."

"Well, I think you are right on that point, sheriff. I came over to tell you that we are going to capture Dick Doolittle and his two partners, Ike Boots and Rags, tonight."

"What!"

"I mean what I say."

Wild then told him all about it, and when he had finished the honest-hearted head of the county fairly hugged him with delight.

"You're a dandy, Young Wild West!" he exclaimed.
"You're a dandy, an' no mistake!"

CHAPTER XI.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDING.

Wild and the sheriff took a walk down to the principal hotel in the town and found that it was running in the usual way.

The proprietor informed them that he was not going to press charges against anyone, as he had received word that enough money would be made up to pay for all the damage that had been done and that it would be forthcoming that night.

The fact was that the biggest damage done was to the hotel, since something like a thousand dollars' worth of stock had been used by the mob.

While they were talking and smoking two strangers rode up and dismounted.

They came in the hotel in a very easy and don't-care sort of fashion.

"Where's the proprietor?" bawled out the taller of the two in a loud voice. "I'm lookin' fur information, I am!"

"Here I am," spoke up the hotel man. "What kin I do for you, stranger?"

"A whole lot, if you're any sort of a man. I'm Dick Doolittle's brother, an' I jest come over from Spondulicks, as I heard there'd been some trouble here. I heard they had Dick in ther lockup, an' come over to git him out."

"He was in ther lockup," retorted the proprietor. "But I reckon they don't know where he is now."

"Did he git out of jail?" the tall man asked in surprise.

"Yes."

"Good enough!"

"He got out, but it won't be many hours before he is in jail again," spoke up Wild, fixing his eyes on the tall man.

"What! You don't mean that, do you, young feller?"

"Yes, I mean it," was the reply. "He got out because two men were foolish enough to let him, but he's going to either be put back there or die in his tracks."

"I reckon not. I'm his brother, an' I guess this man here will draw his charge what he's put in ag'in him, won't you, boss?" and he turned to the landlord.

"I never made any charges ag'in Dick Doolittle in particular," was the retort.

"We can't help whose brother Dick Doolittle is. We've got to git him, an' he's got to hang!" exclaimed the sheriff, bringing his fist down on the bar with a bang. "I'm the sheriff of this county, an' when I says a thing I means it!"

"Well, you jest take back what you said, or they'll be lookin' for another sheriff right away!"

The tall man had drawn his revolver now and he had it on a line with the sheriff's heart.

Before anything further could be said Young Wild West knocked the weapon from the man's hand and covered him with his shooter.

"If there's going to be any shooting done in here, I am going to take a hand!" he said, coolly. "I guess you can't run this town, my friend, nor even the smallest part of it. You just turn your face toward where you came from and get a hustle on you, or you'll never live to see Dick Doolittle hanged. Hurry, now! I mean what I say!"

There was a deep silence as this command was given. The crowd in the hotel bar held their breath, it seemed. But Young Wild West meant business.

The hand that held the revolver leveled at the tall man's head was as steady as a rock, and the look that shone from the dark, handsome eyes spoke volumes.

Suddenly the other stranger made a reach for his shooter. Biff!

Wild's left fist shot out and caught him squarely under the chin.

Down he went to the floor, and then out came the boy's other revolver.

"Get up!" he cried, sternly; "get up, and then the pair of you get out of town as quick as your horses can carry you! Do as I say, or I'll make sieves of you!"

The man scrambled to his feet in a hurry.

"Come on, Bill!" he exclaimed. "It's too warm fur us here, that's certain!"

Then, much to the surprise of the majority of the crowd, the two turned and went out to their horses.

They lost no time in mounting them, and rode off at a gallop down the road that led out of Deadwood.

"Hooray fur Young Wild West!" shouted the sheriff, waving his hat. "Hooray, boys! Let your lungs out, now!"

A deafening cheer went up, and smilingly Wild took off his hat and bowed.

"Set 'em up fur all hands!" said the head of the county when the din had subsided.

This was done, and then Wild left the place.

It was near noon, and he wanted to post Willis what to do at the wedding.

He walked back to the camp, followed by cheers and waving hats, which were in the hands of a crowd of admirers who could not stop from following him.

The cowboys had their fires burning and were preparing dinner when he got back.

"Well, boys," said Wild, "I guess everything is lovely, and we'll have a good time at the wedding to-night. You can figure on it, anyhow, and I'll guarantee that if you don't I'll be one of the most surprised fellows in creation."

"What happened, anyhow, Wild?" asked Cheyenne Charlie, who was anxious to hear how our hero made out on his visit to the sheriff.

Wild told them.

"You had two hitches at it, then?" observed Captain

Darling of the cavalry. "Well, I must say that beat anything I ever heard of."

"Never mind about that," was the laughing retort. "When I get started I can't help it."

"An' ther fun of it is, he never gits started unless he's in ther right," spoke up Cheyenne Charlie.

"Of course not," said the captain. "That makes it all the better."

"Well, we'd better think about getting ready for the wedding to-night," observed our hero, after a pause. "Willis has left it to me to give out the invitations, and I hereby invite all the cowboys in my band and all the troopers, from Captain Darling down. I want you all to look as spruce as you can, and if you don't have a good time it won't be my fault. I will go down to the hotel presently and have the landlord fix up something in the way of refreshments. I meant to give him the order when I was there before dinner, but the meeting with Dick Doolittle's brother and the other bad man made me forget it, I guess. Willis, you can go to your sweetheart's house whenever you're ready, but be sure that you don't say anything about what I told you until I come. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

It was about an hour later when Willis mounted his horse to ride over to the home of his intended wife.

"Will you—er—see—about ther minister, Mr. West?" he asked, blushingly.

"Oh, I've already sent word to him," was the laughing retort. "Or the sheriff did for me, rather. But you can bet that I'll see to it that he gets there, even if I have to carry him. Just go on, now, and don't worry about the minister, or Dick Doolittle, either."

"I ain't worryin', sir."

Willis rode off and a little later Wild called Charlie and Jim and Sam Spud and said:

"Now, we will be the committee to look after things. Come! We will go down to the hotel and stop at the minister's on the way."

The four mounted their horses and rode off.

Wild had no difficulty in learning where the clergyman lived, and when he knocked at the door the good man came in answer to the summons himself.

When he heard what this young visitor wanted he assured him that he had promised the sheriff that he would be on hand punctually at eight.

"I trust that there will be no trouble there," he remarked. "The sheriff told me that the rioters had settled down, and that all was quiet."

"There will be no trouble, sir," said Wild. "There may be just the least flutter of excitement for a few minutes, but you must not mind that. It will be all right, and there will be no one hurt there."

"Are you the young man who is going to wed the daughter of Mr. Pett, sir?"

"No, sir," was the smiling reply. "I am hardly old enough to think of marrying yet. I am only a boy. I

think a fellow should be past twenty-one before he takes a wife, and when I do take one it will be in my own town, Weston, where I have as pretty and true a sweetheart as ever lived."

They passed a few more words and then Wild joined his companions and rode on down to the hotel.

He found a good-sized crowd there, and when the men saw him they broke into a cheer.

Someone shouted three cheers for Young Wild West and his cowboy band, and they were given with a will.

Then our hero had a talk with the proprietor, and the result was that he arranged for the wedding guests to have all they could eat and drink after the marriage was over.

Wild had a way of knowing just how to do things, so he joined in with his partners and gave the landlord a lift in making preparations.

It was supper-time when they got back to the camp, but he advised the men to dispense with that meal and make up for it at the feast.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Dick Doolittle and his two chums in crime remained pretty close in the camp of the redskins all day.

They had arranged with the chief to buy four horses, and had paid half the money over to him.

The balance was to be handed over when they left that evening on their villainous errand.

Doolittle was working a great game, so he thought.

He meant that the kidnapping should be laid upon the Indians, and the three were going to keep on their disguises until after they got well away from Deadwood.

As soon as it was dark they took the three horses, paid over the balance of the money to the chief, and then set out by a roundabout way for the house where the wedding was to take place.

It so happened that the night was a cloudy one, so they managed to get close to the rear of the house, where there was a clump of woods, without being perceived by anyone.

Then it seemed to the villainous trio that things could not have worked any better.

They crept up to the house and found a ladder there that some men had been using in repairing the structure from the damage done it by the rioters.

"This is fine," whispered the leader of the three, as he took hold of the ladder and carefully shifted it to an open window on the upper floor.

Just then they heard the voice of a girl singing.

It was the bride-to-be, and they knew it.

"She'll sing a different song afore long," chuckled Rags.

"I should reckon so!" retorted Ike Boots.

"Never mind. She's goin' to be a bride, anyhow, though it may not be to-night," said Dick Doolittle.

"Who's goin' up there?" asked Rags, when the ladder was in readiness.

"Me an' Ike will go," was the retort. "You wait here, an' jest lay low if anyone comes out of ther back door. Ther weddin' guests are beginnin' to arrive, I kin see."

Up the ladder went Doolittle and Boots.

Two minutes later both were in the house, and the voice of the bride-to-be was still raised in song.

Once in the house the two scoundrels got ready for business.

The door of the room adjoining them was ajar, and as there was a light in it, they were enabled to see two female figures walking back and forth.

They listened, and soon came to the conclusion that they were mother and daughter.

"I guess we may as well act now," whispered Dick Doolittle. "Be careful, now, an' cover ther mouth of ther one you grab. It's got to be done mighty quick, you know."

"All right," replied Ike Boots. "I hope Young Wild West ain't in ther house yet."

Then the two, who looked for all the world like a couple of Sioux Indians, crept to the door.

They pushed it open slowly and found Mrs. Pett and her daughter with their backs to them.

Then it was that they sprang forward to carry out the kidnapping scheme.

"Hold up your hands, you scoundrels!"

The command rang out calm and clear, and then from behind a curtain Young Wild West and Mr. Pett stepped, each with a revolver in his hand.

Doolittle and Ike Boots were stricken temporarily dumb,

The sudden appearance of our hero was altogether too much for them.

"Move one step and you will be dead men!" exclaimed Wild, smiling as though it was a great joke, but holding his shooter as firm as a rock.

Up went the hands of the pair!

They had played their last card and the game was lost. Dick Doolittle realized it only too well.

He said not a word when Cheyenne Charlie and Willis, the cowboy, stepped in and disarmed them.

They were bound and then the sheriff was called.

He came in grinning like a pleased child.

"I reckon you won't git away this time, gents," he said. "I have got your partner downstairs waitin' fur you. Rags tried to put up a fight when Jim Dart nailed him, but it was no use. He's hard an' fast. I guess we'll have a nice little hangin' up at ther jail as soon as a jury kin be got to convict you fellers. Somethin' has got to be did to set an example fur any future rioters, you know."

Half a dozen armed men left the house a few minutes later with the captives, and Young Wild West and his two partners rode along with them to the jail.

The disguised men were as meek as lambs and began to plead when the jail came in sight.

They had made their beds and now they had to lie in them.

The sheriff took good care to place them in the strong-room this time himself, removing the two rascally guards to another apartment.

Then, with a strong guard over them, the prisoners were left to meditate over the fate that was in store for them.

Young Wild West led the way back to the house and found the clergyman ready to begin the ceremony that was to make Willis and pretty Tillie Pett man and wife.

The marriage ceremony was a rather short one, because all hands were anxious to see it over with.

Then congratulations followed, after which the refreshments from the hotel began to arrive.

A wedding in the Wild West is generally a very lively affair.

And so was this one, though nothing out of the way was said or done by the rough, honest men who had gathered there.

The cowboy band supplied music for dancing and the festivities were kept up till daylight.

Though Willis was the best man there, Young Wild West was the central figure.

He handled the affair in such a masterly way that nothing but praise came to him from every side.

The cowboy band was feted by everyone, it seemed, and when the wedding celebration broke up some of the men were a little the worse for wear.

In accordance with the custom in the West, they had imbibed a little too much firewater.

But they retained their good nature through it all, so there was no trouble over it.

It was time to get up when our friends sought their sleeping quarters, and when they did come around for their breakfast it was noon.

Young Wild West found the sheriff waiting for him at the office of Dave Libby, the stockman.

"Mornin', Wild!" he called out. "I've got an awful head on me, but I'm able to do business, fur all that."

"Well, I must say that I feel as well as I ever did in my life," retorted our hero. "You see, I never drink anything strong, and that probably accounts for it."

"I reckon it does, my boy. But never mind. I knowed how I'd feel when I was celebratin', so it's no one's fault but my own. I was jest over to ther jail an' found that ther prisoners are all right. Ther feller what got hit by ther bullet one of ther guards fired at you was there, an' he wants me to let ther rascal go. What do you think about it?"

"Well, I am satisfied, if he is. He is the one who got hurt; not I."

"It has been left to me by ther town officials to use my own judgment about punishin' them two fellers fur lettin' Dick Doolittle an' his pals out of jail. Some seems to think that they oughter be let go now. We've got ther ones they did let out, you know."

"Well, if the officials are satisfied and the man who got shot in the shoulder wants it, if I were you I would let them go."

"Will you come down an' say a few words to 'em afore I do let 'em go, it may do 'em some good?"

"Certainly I will. Just wait till I have something to eat."

Something less than an hour later Young Wild West and his cowboy band rode over to the jail.

A big crowd had gathered there, as the sheriff had given it out that Wild was coming there to pass judgment as to whether the two men who had betrayed their trust should be let go or not.

Their appearance was greeted with resounding cheers.

In a few minutes the two men were brought out in the little square in front of the jail building.

They looked sick enough, but when they saw the kindly eyes of Young Wild West turned upon them they braced up to meet what was coming.

"I don't suppose you two fellows feel very good," said Wild, addressing them. "You are ashamed of yourselves, and I know it. I am satisfied that neither of you would try to shoot me again, so I have advised the sheriff to let you go free."

There was a cheer from the crowd at this and Wild waited till it subsided.

Then he continued:

"I want to give you a little advice before you go. It is this: Be honest in everything you do hereafter and never let your desire for money get the best of you. Now, I believe you have both got families, so go home to them and tell your wives that you are going to be real men in the future."

The cheering was greater than ever at this, and with tears in their eyes the two men thanked the boy.

Then they went on their way rejoicing in their liberty, but still feeling ashamed of the part they played.

"Do you want to have a look at ther prisoners afore you go, Wild?" asked the sheriff.

"Well, yes," was the reply. "I would like to tell something to Dick Doolittle."

They went inside the jail, and the next minute our hero was looking through the bars at the villains.

The Indians togs had been taken from the man they now looked like themselves.

"Well, gentlemen, I am sorry to see any human being in such a plight as you are, but I must say that you brought it all on yourselves. I am not going to interfere in your behalf. The law must take its course."

That was all our hero was going to say, but Dick Doolittle called him back.

"It was you and your cowboys what done it all, Young Wild West," he said, hoarsely. "Don't think that I'm goin' to squeal an' beg fur mercy, fur I've thought it over an' know there ain't none comin' to me. I'm goin' to be strung up, but they'll find me game to ther last. I hope

you'll die ther same way fur meddlin' with me, that's all ther harm I wish you!"

"All right, Mr. Doolittle," was the reply. "But your hopes won't come true, I am afraid. Never mind about me; just make yourself ready for what is before you. I couldn't help you if I wanted to."

That was the last our friends ever saw of the three, but they learned later that they were punished in accordance with the custom of the town.

As they were about to leave the jail Cheyenne Charlie rode up to Wild and said:

"Don't you think them Injuns ought to be given two hours to git away from Deadwood?"

"I do," was the answer. "I'll ask the sheriff what he thinks about it.

He did ask him, and received the assurance that such a course would be taken without delay.

"Let me do ther talkin', will you?" queried the scout. "Sartin. Come on over to ther camp."

They all rode over and soon reached the Indian camp.

The redskins seemed surprised and Yellow Arm came out to learn what the trouble was.

"Say, you measly coyote with ther copper skin," said Cheyenne Charlie, "I've been delegated by ther sheriff to tell you that, unless you git away from this here town in two hours, somethin' will happen to you. Now, git your whole gang together an' light out!"

"Ugh!" was the reply.

But an hour later the Indians were gone.

Young Wild West and his cowboy band remained in Deadwood until the first of the week and then they set out for home.

The cowboys went to Roaring Ranch, the bride of Wil-lis accompanying them, and Young Wild West and his two partners returned to Weston.

But they had enjoyed their trip, and there are many who have not forgotten to this day the tune they played in Deadwood.

THE END.

Read "YOUNG WILD WEST'S INDIAN SCOUT; OR, ARIETTA AND THE PAWNEE MAIDEN," which will be the next number (90) of "Wild West Weekly."

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